DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 718 CE 064 941

AUTHOR Shore, Sue
TITLE A Teacher's Questions in an Adult Literacy Classroom. Possibilities for Dialogue. CRAEHD Publications Thesis Series.
INSTITUTION University of South Australia, Underdale. Centre for Research in Adult Education for Human Development.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-86803-071-6
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 156p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Adult Educators; Adult Literacy; Class Activities; *Classroom Communication; Classroom Environment; *Classroom Techniques; Educational Research; Foreign Countries; *Group Dynamics; *Literacy Education; *Questioning Techniques; Staff Development; Student Behavior; Student Participation; Teacher Behavior; Teacher Student Relationship; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Australia

ABSTRACT

A study addressed the ways in which classroom interaction is structured explicitly and implicitly through a teacher's questions. It examined how this was done through the questions one teacher asked in her adult literacy class and what insights could be gained for adult literacy staff development programs. The research was undertaken in mid-1990 in a technical and further education college in South Australia. Ethnographic methods were used to produce data on classroom interaction; the data, collected from transcripts of classroom discussions, were subjected to analysis informed by critical theory. Contextual data on teaching aims and tensions, teaching session organization, staff development experiences, and reflections on those experiences were used to relate the questions asked and the critical analysis of their consequences to staff development needs for teachers wanting to develop critical educational practices. Findings on questioning practices showed that classroom participation was structured through teacher questions on class procedures, on exploration of knowledge, and on connections between the knowledge explored and students' individual experience. The timing and patterning of questions and feedback to student responses also influenced classroom interaction. In addition, the questions the teacher asked in this study unwittingly constrained discussion. Contains 108 references. Appendixes contain a descriptive report of the study and examples of written passages guiding the discussion. (YLB)

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A TEACHER'S QUESTIONS IN AN ADULT LITERACY CLASSROOM

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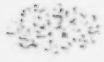

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A teachers' questions in an adult literacy classroom: possibilities for dialogue

Sue Shore

Introducing the CRAEHD publications thesis series

The Centre for Research in Adult Education for Human Development (CRAEHD) carries out research exploring the context and practice of educational programs for adults which are aimed at understanding and/or transforming the way participant learners perceive, value and act upon themselves and their world. The main research interest of CRAEHD is thus concerned to uncover and understand, critique and improve educational practice which purports to address these developmental and transformative dimensions of human learning.

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Adult education for human development refers to educational and training courses facilitating learning for human transformation and development in for example forms of career and vocational review, life transition learning relating to entering and leaving relationships and marriage, bereavement, sickness and healing. It also refers to transformative or developmental ways of working in TAFE and Higher education. Such developmental approaches are designed to encourage more so-called 'deep' as apart from 'surface' or rote learning which can also engage learner's meaning systems and ways of seeing themselves and the world. Finally adult education for human development can refer to self education programs pursued by interest and recreational groups recruited around a particular issue or point of interest who seek to promote their own personal and social development and/or tranformation.

Peter Willis and Marlene Edwards

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Acknowledgements

While this particular research has focused on one study it has taken a number of years to complete. I would like to thank Eileen Willis because she first encouraged me to begin this journey into higher degree work some years ago, and the rewards so far have been abundant.

I am deeply indebted to the teacher who participated in this study. She taught me much about the conditions under which she works to support learning, and was submitted to intense scrutiny at a time when she could well have done without it. In particular she taught me that there are enormous constraints to implementing a viable radical pedagogy of adult literacy and as a teacher educator I need to be aware of these constraints if I am not to succumb to dogma. This study could not have been completed without her openness and willingness to share insights about her practice.

The women in the class contributed to my increased awareness of the complexities of literacy teaching and learning and I thank them for allowing me to work in their classroom and share their learning.

Joelie Hancock guided me in pulling together the many threads woven through this study and her efforts are much appreciated. I thank her for the time and effort she gave to my explorations of the data and her willingness to accommodate my needs as a learner. The writing process has been arduous at times, but she has taught me the value of writing clearly and making my assumptions explicit.

Barry Elsey, Di Shearer, Helen Connole and Judy Gill assisted with early academic work which laid the foundation for this study as did Gerry England and Bob Smith who encouraged me in my explorations into critical theory. My critical friends, Vicki Crowley and Jo Kijas, were supportive of the radical tradition but critical enough to challenge vigorously the ways in which I interpreted what I 'saw'. Our meetings helped to provide a structure for exploration, as did talks with Jan Orrell and Trish Branson. I would particularly like to thank Barbara Comber who reviewed my analyses and discussed the data. Her research experience and insights were very helpful.

Although it didn't seem like it at the time, my personal and professional commitments had to continue while this report was being written. Many people have contributed time and energy to caring for my daughter over the last few years and I thank them all; particularly Mary Novak, Leonie and Yollana Shore, Denise and Courtney Stephen, Norm Habel, Jan Orrell and Anjali Habel-Orrell, and Liz and Hannah Spurgeon. Miriam Wood and Denise Stephen undertook transcription of classroom discussions and word processing of early drafts of the thesis and I am thankful for their nimble fingers and accurate typing skills.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the support Greg and Lauren have given while awaiting the completion of this final phase of the award and appreciate very much their recognition of my own need to grow.

Summary

This study began with the contention that teachers structure classroom interaction. It set out to examine how this was done through the questions one teacher asked in her adult literacy class and what insights could be gained for adult literacy staff development programs.

The research was undertaken in mid 1990 in a DETAFE college in South Australia and data was produced over a ten week term. I used ethnographic methods to produce data on classroom interaction and subjected the data to analysis informed by critical theory.

The central data consisted of transcripts of classroom discussions. Contextual data on teaching aims and tensions, teaching session organization and staff development experiences, and reflections on those experiences, were used to relate the questions asked, and the critical analysis of their consequences, to staff development needs for teachers wanting to develop critical educational practices.

Findings on questioning practices show classroom participation was structured through teacher questions on class procedures, on exploration of knowledge and on connections between the knowledge explored and students' individual experience. Second, the timing and patterning of questions and feedback to student responses also influenced classroom interaction. In addition the questions the teacher asked in this study unwittingly constrained discussion.

Change to a critical practice of education requires that both micro and macro levels of social change be addressed. This study proposes that teachers seeking to adopt micro-level change through critical classroom practices are confronted by a number of tensions and challenges. There are tensions inherent in achieving both teacher's and students' aims; there are constraints arising from limited time and limited staff development. There are also difficulties to be faced in adopting alternative perspectives which challenge the 'naturalness' of interactions, in particular classroom interactions. Teacher educators must take these constraints and tensions into account if they want to assist literacy teachers to develop a viable radical pedagogy of adult literacy.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study addresses the ways in which classroom interaction is structured explicitly and implicitly through a teacher's questions. It makes problematic literacy teaching and learning and examines the implications for adult literacy staff development programs.

Relevant issues include how adult literacy teaching and learning is conceptualized in theory and practice, teacher-student relations in the adult literacy classroom, teacher questioning practices which establish these relations and the implications of such issues for adult literacy staff development programs.

1.2 Perspectives of adult literacy provision

Adult literacy and basic education provision in Western industrialized countries is intended to address, in part, the inadequacies of initial schooling, thus providing access to

> *continuing education, vocational education, or cultural and recreational activity. (ACACE:1979:12)*

In the 1970s and 80s much of this provision was underpinned by humanistic notions of student-centred education which supported holistic development of the person, as evidenced by the range of options noted above. Literacy provision specifically offered a 'second chance' to individuals who, for one reason or another, had not acquired the basic skills necessary to access further personal or vocational development.

In the 1980s and 90s the 'second chance' has been replaced by a concept of 'lifelong learning' which shifts the educational focus away from deficits emerging from initial schooling experiences to new learning opportunities emerging from demands made on adults as they mature.

In the 1990s in particular new learning opportunities are closely associated with vocational outcomes. Thus while 'lifelong learning' has broadened the concept of adult learning in a temporal sense, its Australian focus in the 1990s has been constrained by the close association with the education and training required for national prosperity.

A number of writers in the field of adult literacy have challenged traditional perspectives of literacy which purport to offer two things. First, traditional perspectives offer collaborative modes of learning where students are involved in developing both the content and process of their program. Second, the results of such learning are aimed at improving access to material goods and services previously unavailable to

many of the clientele of literacy programs. As a result of increased access it is proposed there will be a subsequent increase in the quality of life experienced by the clientele. (1) Some writers, notably Freire and Macedo (1987), Street (1984) and Lankshear with Lawler (1987) suggest that adult literacy provision has the potential to perpetuate initial schooling practices which maintain unequal relations of power between students and teachers. Furthermore, Horsman (1990) believes that educational achievement, and literacy ability in particular, plays a minor part in women's prospects for a 'second chance'.

The above writers, with others in the field of adult education (Westwood:1980), believe that adult literacy provision should challenge traditional power relations between teachers and learners and should provide opportunities for participants to contest the way in which knowledge is produced and reproduced in educational programs. (2) They recognize that potentially adult literacy participation is one means by which previous social and educational inequities are examined and future opportunities are explored and created.

This seam of radical challenges is thin however within the overall literature on adult literacy. Its impact on current practice is relatively small and its potential to influence policy and provision is limited. Harris (1989) suggests that one reason for this limited influence is the threat it poses to traditional understandings of educational practice. Additionally Lankshear (1991:24) argues that radical educators may not speak to the 'urgent felt needs of the illiterate, unskilled and dispossessed' and thus may be marginal to students' immediate educational concerns.

Writings which challenge the systematic maintenance of unequal socio-cultural, political and economic relations are often called radical, libertarian, emancipatory, liberationist or critical. While McLaren (1989:165) suggests they have 'points of difference and fusion' all of them propose a view that education is potentially liberating. Education should serve as a site for contesting the unequal practices which individuals and groups are exposed to in their daily lives, rather than to encourage conformity in an unequal society.

In this study I set out to examine teacher questioning practices in the light of the claims of radical writers who address adult literacy provision. I do this by relating the claims specifically to classroom participation and knowledge exploration in adult literacy classrooms. I was interested in how a teacher's questions structured ways of operating in the classroom. I also wanted to know how teachers assisted in constructing a framework for knowledge exploration and relating that knowledge to student experience.

Within the radical tradition these three processes are seen as potential sources of both 'empowerment' and 'disempowerment' (3), key issues in the radical tradition. Furthermore it is important that teacher educators and policy makers understand the practical implications of emancipatory goals in terms of the choices teachers face and

what is actually possible in the classroom. Following Giroux (1981:4) I was concerned that my contribution to a radical pedagogy (4) of adult literacy would be relevant and viable. The study describes the choices confronting adult literacy teachers and in doing so reveals the tensions teachers face as they do their work. In making these tensions explicit the study aims to assist teachers to reflect more comprehensively on their practice in classrooms.

This chapter sketches the issues relevant to an understanding of radical adult literacy practices, in particular teacher questioning. I outline the forces influencing Australian adult literacy provision in the 1990s. Insights of the radical tradition are integral to understanding emerging trends in an era where educational provision is driven by forces of economic rationalism. Bagnall (1991:5) believes these economic trends encourage a 'trivialisation' of education, resulting in

> *educational mediocrity, constrained choice, servitude, conservatism, uniformity and an unresponsiveness to changed circumstances.*

All of these are the anti-thesis of a radical pedagogy of adult literacy.

1.3 Background: Adult literacy in Australia in the 1990s

There are three major influences on adult literacy provision in the 1990s: the impact of the Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC), initiatives emerging from International Literacy Year (ILY), and Award restructuring. ALAC provided the first national recognition of adult literacy as a serious issue needing increased resources and research. ILY provided funding for a range of activities to increase public awareness, and participation in adult literacy. Award restructuring brought with it a recognition that the literacy skills of Australians within the workplace were central to improved productivity. The momentum of these three forces provided a greater awareness and examination of adult literacy provision. (5)

ALAC was announced by the Commonwealth government in 1987. Its purpose was to be a

> *major cooperative campaign - a national effort drawing from all relevant levels of education, the media, private individuals and enterprises and the community generally to drastically reduce the present levels of adult literacy (sic) and to greatly increase and make more sophisticated the research-knowledge base which we have available to guide our actions (Lo Bianco in Ernst and Young: 1990: 1).*

ALAC activities provided a focus to ILY, particularly as forty percent of Australian government funding to this program was specifically allocated for adult literacy. ILY itself was a focus for intense activity preceding and following the year. It was a mass public education campaign to extend and expand industry and community understanding and provision of adult literacy.

In 1989 the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL:1989) released the following definition:

> *Literacy is the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it incorporates numeracy. It includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, reader or writer to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations. For an advanced technological society such as Australia, the goal is an active literacy which allows people to think, create and question, in order to participate effectively in society.*

Central to such a definition are three features: first, literacy is much more than reading and writing, second it is related to socio-cultural contexts and third it requires that literacy users make choices about the ways in which they participate in literacy activities. *"No Single Measure"* (Wickert:1989), the first national and highly influential survey of adult literacy skills repeated this broad understanding of literacy. Wickert defined literacy as

> *using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential.*

Her empirical data highlighted different types of literacy and went beyond the 'official' definition in advocating the notion of different literacies appropriate to contemporary Australian society. (6)

Increased literacy awareness associated with ILY came at a significant time in Australia's political and economic history. Literacy became part of a public agenda along with other political and economic issues. In 1989 Minister Dawkins (in Ernst & Young:1990:1) suggested

> *In future workers without literacy skills will find it increasingly difficult to participate in the retraining and skilling programs that award restructuring and other workforce training initiatives will soon bring to Australian workplaces.*

The coincidental timing of ALAC, from which ILY initiatives emerged, the ILY itself and industry restructuring have given adult literacy a focus in the workplace unparalleled in previous years. Different levels of literacy have always existed in the workplace. What is so significant in the 1990s is the desire to coopt literacy into the 'nuts and bolts' (Matheson :1990:5) of micro economic reform. For example, funding guidelines for DETAFE and community providers are placing increasing emphasis on vocationally oriented literacy programs and reducing in relative terms the funding available for literacy programs which identify personal and social goals as outcomes (Office of Tertiary Education:1990).

The Strategic Review of Commonwealth/State Adult Literacy Expenditure (DEET:1990a:Chapter 11:7) shows how complete this incorporation is by using a definition of literacy which includes

the attainments necessary to get access to, and to succeed in, the mainstream post-compulsory education and training system and or to enter and advance in the labor market.

This would appear to perpetuate Fueyo's (1988:107) observation that adult literacy students are often conceived of as 'economic beings whose goals are job security and advancement'.

Adult literacy staff development has often been described as ad hoc (Branson:1988, Wickert and Zimmerman:1989), lacking in any cohesive national and at times intra state organization, and largely dependent on small hourly teaching loads of inexperienced but eager sessional workers (Shaw:1990:10), availability of funds for programs, and goodwill on the part of practitioners and provider organizations (DEET:1990a, Tillet:1989).

Increased attention to the nature and scope of literacy difficulties in Australian society has caused greater attention to be focused on program infrastrucutre, particularly the entry criteria for recruiting literacy staff and the opportunities for professional development.

The Coordinating Agency for Training Adult literacy Personnel in Australia (CATALPA) was formed in 1990 from ILY funds in response to the need for a more systematic approach to adult literacy provision. This was the first time that training needs had been formally acknowledged and funded nationally, although the initial funding ($250,000) and extended funding until mid 1991 is seriously disproportionate to actual needs.

The inaugural CATALPA Forum held in Sydney in October 1990, and funded from the initial ILY grant brought together participants involved in adult literacy tutor training to 'map the field' of provision. Repeatedly national themes emerged of unclear understandings of requirements. In addition the nature of adult literacy provision was significantly different in each of the States as a result of different histories, funding and different public ownership of programs. Training provision and program outcomes were largely dependent on affiliation with a 'resource rich' or 'resource poor' state and provision was compounded by the emerging needs of a large number of new trainers and providers specifically addressing literacy needs in the workplace. The above issues prior to 1989 are described well in Wickert and Zimmerman (1989) and Zimmerman and Norton (1989).

The CATALPA Forum identified limited opportunities for preservice and inservice education and training of adult literacy personnel at undergraduate and graduate level. The education and training debate is not taken up in this study but it has been identified as a contentious issue in the appropriate preparation of adult literacy practitioners given the complexity of tasks required of an adult literacy teacher. (7)

Limited or short term government funding has held back long term commitment by institutional providers. This lack of ownership has also been identified as an issue in consolidating inservice and preservice provision. Previously, limited funding structures and commitment to literacy have meant that provider organizations have either not recognized staff development as a priority issue or have been unable to address it adequately. Additionally, formal tertiary awards are not attractive to sessional staff who have no guarantee of a place in the profession.

Adult literacy is a dynamic and evolving field. It has been operating formally through ACAL since 1976 but its entry into the industrial arena has raised new issues. As Assistant Secretary of the ACTU, Laurie Carmichael, is quoted as saying, "award restructuring can't happen without (adult literacy)" (Wickert:1991). This in itself is not untrue, however the current economic climate has generated a new arena for provision, 'workplace literacy', which appears to have ignored fundamental debates about the nature of adult literacy and relationships between literacy, work and 'empowerment'.

Within this climate literacy becomes a means to an end driven by industrial needs and economic reform. McLaren (1989:229) believes students and teachers are marginalized as accountability schemes, management pedagogies and rationalized curricula are foregrounded as the driving force for increased literacy development.

In an educational climate which is increasingly driven by industrial notions of profit and productivity I contend there is a need to persistently question commonsense (8) understandings of literacy, its perceived benefits and the relationship between literacy acquisition and the level of control one has over life opportunities.

1.4 Education as problematic

Within the economic climate outlined above literacy skills are central to gaining access to employment opportunities being created in the 1990s. C. Wright Mills (1959) proposes there are two ways to interpret social relations, and these can be related to literacy provision and the promises it offers. (See page 11 and further discussion in Chapter 2.) Embedded in traditional perspectives of adult literacy are implicit notions of self-improvement, personal gain, and access via literacy skills, to the world of work and economic security provided by employment. What is not explicit in these perspectives is the presence of structured power relations in society which often work against liberal humanist notions of personal growth which are embedded in traditional perspectives of adult literacy. Gaining control over our individual lives is not just a matter of individual action.

A central feature of a 'sociological imagination' as developed by Mills (1959:8) is the distinction between 'the personal troubles of milieu' and 'the public issues of social structure'. This distinction between our own 'private troubles' and 'public issues' provides the opportunity to step beyond an individual analysis of social interaction.

In this way 'biography', or the way in which individuals experience their own lives, is seen to be a function of 'history', or the wider context in which lives are lived.

Working within this framework all aspects of education its purposes, structures and practices, and the knowledge produced and reproduced within education - are problematic. Increased knowledge, understandings of social structures, or enhanced skills development may not provide access to economic security in a society where particular kinds of knowledge and skills are not valued, or more pragmatically where there are limited jobs (Street: 1990).

Tennant (1988) asserts that adult education is similarly problematic. Provisions which aim for more effective participation in society in fact are not fully taking account of structural factors which actively work against that participation. He states that 'access and equity' initiatives offer participation in an educational sense in a society which is largely unequal in its provision of access to material and social benefits for a majority of the population. Similarly, Simon (1987) suggests 'equality of opportunity' programs offer the chance to participate within the existing socio-cultural, political and economic structures of society: social transformation, that is changing the inequitable distribution of resources is not an explicit part of the 'equal opportunity' agenda and therefore the programs have limited impact on personal and social change.

Understanding educational provision within this framework reveals inadequacies in literacy models which seek to provide forms of educational and vocational improvement, without addressing the presence of social structures. To a certain extent literacy programs of this type offer the illusion of control. (9)

A critical sociological analysis provides a means of contesting perspectives of literacy which locate lack of skills and lack of knowledge with individuals. Individuals' 'biographies' in classrooms are connected to the social, political and economic 'histories' of institutions, locating individual equity and inequity within a wider framework of educational and social relations.

Within the radical tradition individual change cannot be addressed without also addressing socio-cultural, political and economic inequities. This connection between individual and social conditions is at the heart of radical understandings of 'empowerment'. The fact remains however, that the site for changes in adult literacy is the classroom. In classrooms teachers play a pivotal role in developing or expanding student expectations of the learning process. Additionally, students do seek access to knowledge and skills which they have not acquired in their previous educational experience and this need for 'skills' should not be dismissed at the expense of more esoteric political beliefs about educational 'empowerment' (Lankshear:1991). Current research on teacher questioning (Wallerstein: 1983, Young:1984, 1987, 1990, Dillon:1988) suggests teachers' questions are crucial in shaping what students learn. This study addresses 'dialogue' (Shor and Freire:1987:102) as the nexus of personal,

educational and social change by examining the types of questions one teacher asked in an adult literacy classroom.

Teachers' questions establish ways of operating in classrooms and provide one means by which knowledge, particularly traditionally accepted knowledge, is contested. In addition teachers' questions can also help students to make connections between classroom knowledge and their own individual experiences. This study set out to reveal to what extent questions were being used to involve students in classroom processes, to contest rather than reproduce traditional knowledge and to make connections between students' own 'biographies' and their wider 'histories'.

The preponderance of theoretical writings in radical adult literacy has made it difficult for classroom practitioners to tease out the methodological implications for radical classroom practice. This research sets out to expose classroom practices that reduce or expand involvement in educational processes. Insights about teachers' questioning assist teachers and teacher educators to explain and promote practices which are consistent with the claims and intentions of radical perspectives.

1.5 Summary

I contend that literacy provision in the 1990s exists in a climate which gives priority to short term, quick fix solutions relevant to market place needs (Wickert:1990, DEET:1990b). The demand for a quick fix masks what Billig (1988:chap 2) calls 'the dilemmatic aspects' of teachers' practice, which assist them to explore more fully the nature of their work and its contradictions. Within the current climate many teachers' choices about their classroom purposes and practices are restricted by commonsense understandings of literacy; that is, that literacy is about gaining particular kinds of knowledge and skills and that its acquisition will have far reaching effects on lives beyond the classroom. Radical analyses of adult literacy practice pose questions about educational settings which challenge the purposes and benefits of adult literacy provision, rather than seeking answers to questions which presume educational outcomes. Such radical perspectives question the very nature of literacy and problematize (that is 'problem-pose rather than problem solve' (Smyth:1987)), the process by which 'empowerment' through literacy might be achieved.

The purpose of this introduction has been to set the broad context within which this study took place and establish the major issues. Chapter two connects the distinct fields of radical perspectives of adult literacy teaching and teacher questioning practices. These two fields have different and diverse histories. The purpose in relating them here is to draw together significant threads and related issues rather than provide a complete review of their literatures.

Chapter three connects key elements of critical pedagogy with underlying principles of critical social science research and examines the methodological implementation of such a research approach. I describe the project and the methodology used to

produce and analyse the data. Data 'produced' (Simon & Dippo:1986) in the study is presented in Chapter four and in Chapter five I offer researcher reflections on the contentious and problematic aspects of the study.

Chapter six discusses the data from a critical sociological perspective. I examine categories of questions and contextual factors such as timing and patterns of questions, and relate these to the teacher's control over social interaction in the classroom.

Chapter seven reviews classroom interaction as a function of the tensions facing the adult literacy teacher in this study. The chapter draws together the findings on teacher questioning and adult literacy staff development practices to explore the potential for realizing a critical practice of adult literacy within the current political and economic climate.

Endnotes

1 These challenges are further explored in Chapter 2.

2 In this study I do not expand on theories of reproduction and resistance in schools, however I use the terms production and reproduction of knowledge often. By reproduction I mean the inherent acceptance of commonsense (see note 6) understandings and perpetuation of these understandings in the knowledge chosen as the basis of classroom learning. I am not suggesting this process is automatic or unproblematic, merely that in many classrooms knowledge is taken as given and reproduced accordingly. By production I mean the construction of knowledge as an active social and political process. The knowledge produced from such classroom learning is a function of interaction between teachers and learners and their worlds, and the outcomes of this interaction are contestable.

3 Within this study terms such as 'empowerment' and 'disempowerment' are made problematic in a number of ways. Chapter 2 further explores the terms noting the different types of 'empowerment' emerging from different forms of literacy.

4 Throughout the study I use the term pedagogy to refer to teaching and learning in adult education. While the term 'andragogy' used by Knowles (1973) has been offered to describe adult learning as distinct from the learning of children, it is the contention of this thesis that the distinction is not necessary where radical perspectives of education inform learning and teaching.

Knowles himself has acknowledged recently (Feuer and Geber:1988) that of the five principles distinguishing andragogy from pedagogy, only adult experience is a consistent theme. Radical perspectives of education acknowledge this as part of what all learners and teachers bring to the educational setting. The term pedagogy will be used in this study. Chapter 2 further compares a 'political' perspective of pedagogy with traditional pedagogical practices.

5 A fourth initiative, the Federal government White Paper, *Australia's Language, The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* has formalized the initiatives emerging from ALAC, ILY and Award Restructuring concerns. It provides a framework within which literacy provision and training can be consolidated and extended to accommodate the demands which will be made of adult literacy providers in the near future.

6 There are some problems with this definition but they are best taken up in Chapter two when I discuss definitions of literacy. Additionally it should be noted that I emphasize the nature of literacy emerging from Wickert's research rather than the percentages often quoted as the key findings of the study.

7 In addition this debate should be seen as problematic; it focuses the different needs served by education and/or training programs for employers, employees and politicians.

8 'Commonsense' is used here to indicate what Lankshear (1991:27) calls the 'uncritical and essentially unconscious way of perceiving and understanding aspects of daily life that has become common at the time'. In this way social relations appear to be 'natural' and not open to challenge.

9 This is taken up more fully in Chapters six and seven where I discuss the nature of negotiation and control available to the women in this study.

Chapter 2: Critical adult literacy and *teachers' questions*

2.1 Introduction

In the introduction to this study I referred to a history of radicalism in the adult literacy field. While the labels may differ - being variously called radical, libertarian, critical and/or emancipatory, Smith's (1990:177) description typifies this approach. He suggests that all emancipatory/critical perspectives of educational practice are

> *ideologically critical, ... concerned with reform ... and guided by a vision of human and political emancipation.*

This chapter draws together the two key elements of this study, critical adult literacy teaching and teacher questioning practices, within the framework of a radical tradition as outlined in Chapter one. The radical tradition has its roots in Marxism, a tradition with various schools of thought which generally analyse social interaction and power relations between individuals and groups in terms of the economic and material conditions of those relations. Radical/critical (1) theorists adopt approaches which challenge power relations embedded in all aspects of society. As McLaren (1989:164) notes

> *(critical theorists) do not consider capitalism an irrevocable evil, (however) they do insist that its pattern of exploitation has produced an economic rationality that infuses current thinking on social and educational issues and continues to contribute to massive problems such as racism, sexism, and classism.*

While this study has been informed by the work of critical theory it also acknowledges the multiple perspectives embedded within the radical tradition and critical theory, in addition to the growing body of literature critiquing these approaches to understanding social relations. Critiques in relation to literacy are briefly explored in section 2.4 of this chapter.

The main influence on this study has been the work of educators in schools and adult education: the American influences of Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor and Paulo Freire are most predominant and to a lesser extent British adult educators such as Westwood, Keddie and Horsman whose work addresses literacy provision in Canada.

This chapter reviews how adult literacy practice is informed by critical theory: I outline the central elements of a critical educational practice and review how these understandings inform perspectives of literacy. I draw together aspects of the research on teachers' questions and the impact of teachers' questions on classroom learning. I relate this research on teachers' questions to aspects of critical literacy identified in the literature.

This study on teacher questioning practices, set in the context of critical literacy, has implications for adult literacy staff development programs which attempt to make problematic the complexity of literacy learning and teaching.

2.2 Central elements of critical practice

This section outlines six central elements underpinning critical literacy practice. These elements are:

1 the political as part of everyday life
2 the socially constructed nature of knowledge
3 the ideological underpinnings of teaching
4 similarities between schooling and adult education
5 the centrality of change in radical adult education
6 education as a means of challenging as well as perpetuating the status quo.

2.2.1 The political as part of everyday life

Lankshear with Lawler (1987:28) argues that rather than commonsense views which portray politics as the structures of government, political issues must be seen as part of the daily social interaction undertaken by individuals.

> *When we speak of politics or the political as a sphere of human life, we refer to the operation and exercise of structural power - including state jurisdiction - within the context of people pursuing their interests, goals and aspirations, as members of a society in which access to power within the social structure ... is unequally distributed.*

In this sense political relations in society are composed of individual social relations, and social and economic structures of institutions. While the latter purport to serve the interests of individuals in society, a radical analysis proposes that they also operate to perpetuate unequal distribution of power.

Within this perspective struggles for power are played out at individual and institutional levels and those struggles are central to the emerging relations of power established and contested between groups and individuals. Claiming and reclaiming power is a political process which operates at individual and structural levels in society.

2.2.2 The social construction of knowledge

Critical perspectives of education contend that knowledge is socially produced, rather than existing as a body of information awaiting discovery. It

> *is the product of agreement or consent between individuals who live out particular social relations (eg of class, race and gender) who live in particular junctures in time* (McLaren:1989:169)

What counts as knowledge or 'fact' can be determined by particular groups, individuals or practices within a community. Within a critical perspective, educational institutions are central to the production and reproduction of forms of knowledge which can either perpetuate or contest the inequitable distribution of power relations in society. (2)

2.2.3 Ideological underpinnings of teaching

Given this central role of educational institutions in knowledge production Simon (1987) talks of ways to address the need for educational and social change through a 'pedagogy of empowerment'. Simon's distinction between 'pedagogy' and 'teaching' is useful and serves to connect the two central elements of this study: critical literacy and teacher questioning practices. Both have implications for adult literacy staff development programs underpinned by radical education theories.

Simon uses 'teaching' to encompass the specific forms of classroom practice associated with implementing and evaluating classroom content and processes. In contrast, 'pedagogy ... propose(s) a political vision' (Simon:1987) of classroom interaction which incorporates both the personal and structural politics described previously by Lankshear with Lawler (1987). 'Teaching' is associated with classroom activities aimed at academic progress; Simon's 'pedagogy' goes beyond classroom activities to establish a fundamental connection with educational ideologies which challenge power relations between teachers and learners as well as the broad purposes and practices of education. 'Pedagogy' acknowledges the active role schools and other institutions play in the process by which knowledge is produced. Furthermore a 'political pedagogy' includes a view of learners and teachers as active partners in the process of negotiating forms of knowledge. At the same time it encompasses the broader relations of unequal power operating between teachers and learners which are embedded within traditional social and educational structures.

2.2.4 Similarities between schooling and adult education

Current adult education practices are also believed to replicate the constraints and inequities of initial schooling. Hart (1990:125) reviews critical adult educator Jack Mezirow's work in adult education and talks of the need for

> *forms of education which are liberating rather than merely adjusting, and which point to new possibilities for thought and action rather than fixate the learner to the status quo.*

Similarly, other writers in the field of radical education recognize the need to challenge the purposes and practices of education. Ira Shor (in Lather: 1989: 164) talks of 'a pedagogy for transcending our limits' and Sallie Westwood (1980:37) speaks of the need to redress 'the middle class bias of adult education'.

2.2.5 The centrality of change in radical adult education

Brookfield (1987) argues that issues of power and control are central to radical adult education, which is fundamentally about change. His definition of 'political learning' presumes a growing awareness of social inequities and subsequent action to change those inequities. He believes political learning involves

> *developing a critical awareness of how hierarchies of power and status infuse all personal and group relations. It is realizing that patterns of dominance and submission become etched into the ground rules of relationships, unless constant and determined attempts to prevent this are made by those involved.* (Brookfield: 1987: 162-163)

Furthermore 'political learning' is at the heart of both social and individual change, deemed to be central to adult education. Radical perspectives of education view individual and social change as interconnected. Ira Shor (Shor and Freire: 1987 :107) in a conversation with Paulo Freire goes so far as to say 'there is no personal selfempowerment'. Freire agrees, replying

> *[e]ven when you individually feel yourself **most** free, if this feeling is not a **social** feeling, if you are not able to use your **recent** freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment and freedom (original emphasis).*

The challenge for adult educators is to connect these levels of empowerment without becoming paralysed by the change required in the 'totality of society'.

2.2.6 Education as a means of challenging as well as perpetuating the status quo

What emerges from radical traditions is a view that education generally, and in this particular instance adult literacy education, serves to perpetuate forms of knowledge and knowledge claims which maintain inequitable distribution of resources or access to resources. However, adult education institutions are also sites where the status quo can be challenged (Westwood: 1980). Such opportunities are woven throughout the fabric of teachers' work. Teachers have the potential to subvert the structural power of institutions to increase the personal and collective power of learners.

2.3 Adult literacy from a critical perspective

The six elements presented in the previous section are central to an understanding of critical adult literacy learning and teaching. When viewed from a critical perspective literacy is not a set of concretely definable, value free skills which exist in a single form, or for a single purpose. The next section of this chapter explores three perspectives on the forms literacy takes, in the context of two recurring 'promises' of

literacy programs. First, the intention that participation in adult literacy programs offers a 'new' educational life, not only a second chance, but a different kind of chance, to learn in an environment which will support learner participation in program planning. In the first approach to literacy, the functional approach, the promise focuses more on content than process. In the second and third approaches to literacy the balance between content and process is more even. The promise is consistent however with current commonly held adult education practices which offer the learner opportunities to choose and negotiate program content and process. The publication *Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Education* (1988, 1989, 1990) offers examples, particularly *Good Practice* Number 1 (1988).

The second promise is that adult literacy participation will offer a new vocational start by redressing limited literacy and communication skills. This promise implies that literacy development will be accompanied by employment and vocational mobility. Horsman (1989) refers to this as the 'promise of literacy' and suggests that the promise offers an improved quality of life for literacy participants. The flaws inherent in these promises are addressed in the following sections where three different forms of literacy are viewed through a critical lens.

The three perspectives of literacy explored in the following section are useful in conceptualizing literacy learning and literacy use, however each is in danger of portraying literacy development in a largely deterministic fashion. The categories are used here to identify the different forms literacy takes but I also take up the issue of a static classification system later in this chapter. The forms of adult literacy are:

1 functional literacy
2 cultural literacy
3 critical literacy.

2.3.1 Functional Literacy

McLaren (1988:213) believes functional literacy refers primarily to the

> *technical mastery of particular skills necessary for students to decode simple texts such as street signs, instruction manuals or the front page of the daily newspaper.*

In industrialized countries this perspective assumes that given a set of skills, any student will have the opportunity for material and intellectual success. Employment, and social and personal success are believed to rest within the grasp of all individuals, and adult literacy programs promise the chance of success by providing students with a set of functional skills which will gain them entry to the world of work.

A functional approach to literacy has been consolidated by a proliferation of assessment and competency scales which indicate "essential" literacy skills. Kazemak (1990:55) suggests studies which make use of such measures of literacy promote class based notions of literacy and depict "illiterate" (3) adults 'as if they were little more than functionaries within the world of corporate capitalism' (1990:56).

Grant (1986:16) is critical of the promise inherent in functional literacy acquisition. She highlights the argument against literacy as a guarantee of 'economic benefit, social mobility and self-fulfilment'. She establishes the existence of a set of 'literacy myths' and 'alternative readings' which explore commonsense beliefs about literacy. The myths are based on functional notions of literacy which portray it as static and unchanging, composed of a series of skills but essentially a unified competency and generally unrelated to the social context in which it is set. Her alternative readings call for new views of literacy and literacy learning to include the active process of taking meaning from surrounding social contexts.

Functional skills are often described as letter writing, filling in forms, and reading newspapers and similar activities. Such activities will most certainly be needed and in the past a criticism of radical educators has been that they have not provided the practical opportunities to acquire skills (Allman:1990:24). But as Freire (in Shor and Freire:1987), Clarke (1990) and others point out the significant question to ask is 'functional for whom?'

Who gains by maintaining a view of literacy based on a set of functional competencies? And what are the relative merits of acquiring such skills for respective stakeholders such as educators/students, employers/employees and politicians in the educational process? What kind of knowledge is reproduced and prioritized in the process of valuing the above named 'functional' competencies as essential prerequisites for further literacy learning? Do functional literacy tests actually contribute to the 'empowerment', (read 'increased control') of those they define and categorize, or do those same tests stand in the way of addressing the complex range of needs identified by learners? In addition, is an absence of such skills any indication that individuals are in fact not able to function in society?

Functional literacy skills themselves are not the issue; what is contested is the way in which they are defined, prioritized and taught as if they exist devoid of sociocultural, political and economic contexts.

2.3.2 Cultural literacy

McLaren (1988:213) contrasts functional literacy with cultural literacy which he describes as

> *the acquisition of a broad range of factors which accompany functional literacy, such as familiarity with particular linguistic traditions or bodies of information.*

Both the linguistic aspects of text and the cultural practices valued in those texts are fundamental to the meaning making process. Cultural literacy includes the technical skills of decoding and making meaning of text in addition to understanding the variety of linguistic ways by which meanings are represented. Within this perspective, words cannot be separated from the cultural context in which texts are written or read. In recent years in America 'cultural canons' (see for example Bloom, 1987, and Hirsch,

1987) have prescribed a foundational set of books and knowledge which suggest a largely context free requirement for effective literacy. There is no mention of the socio-cultural, political and economic context which shapes and prioritizes one set of knowledge above another, or how that knowledge might be acquired.

Cultural perspectives of literacy support the belief that 'disadvantage' can be overcome by raising the cultural and intellectual level of all students. Cultural literacy 'empowers' people to 'interact effectively' with the social environment. Its acquisition is aimed at change within the person to enable her/him to interact within existing social norms - in this respect it equates with the 'effective participation in Australian society' advocated by current definitions of literacy supported by Australian government reports and many major literacy organizations (ACAL:1989, Ministry of Education:1990).

Rigg and Kazemak (in Horsman:1989) highlight the inherent flaws in literacy tests which ignore major indicators such as ethnicity and gender, which influence first, the types of knowledge and experiences that the reader brings to the text, and second, the opportunities readers and writers might have to apply literacy abilities. One such test in America, the Adult Performance Level (APL) provides a performance profile of knowledge, goals and tasks ''illiterate'' adults might achieve.

> *but nowhere does APL suggest what to do if you're not allowed to fill out the form because you're Black, Brown or female. (Horsman:1989:79)*

Thus performance on a literacy scale may have nothing to do with the actual opportunities available to use literacy abilities. In Australia a number of competency rating scales (Griffin and Forwood:1991, Mageean and Wilson:1988) have perpetuated this trend to assume a common cultural context for literacy reporting and use.

Again cultural literacy per se is not the issue. What is at issue is the way in which some cultural values, beliefs and practices become marginalized at the expense of other values, beliefs and practices. This results in 'cultural canons' which represent the foundation of inequitable and systematically maintained relations of power between individuals and groups in society. Such 'canons' are legitimized further by their incorporation in literacy tests which ignore the wider constraints on literacy use.

2.3.3 Critical literacy

Emancipatory or critical literacy on the other hand begins with the premise that for too long definitions of literacy have accentuated the linguistic and written competencies of language and have denied the intricate relationship between literacy and knowledge, language and power. Like cultural perspectives, critical literacy assumes that text and context cannot be separated. In addition, critical perspectives of literacy suggest that relations of power are a central element of the social context and that different forms of literacy perpetuate relations of power in different ways. Critical literacy is about decoding the values embedded in texts, the social construction of knowledge and the means by which learners gain access to literacy.

First, McLaren (1988:218) suggests we should recognize that

> *all texts, written, spoken, or otherwise represented constitute ideological weapons capable of enabling certain groups to solidify their power through acts of linguistic hegemony.*

To this end the critical literacy process involves

> *decoding the ideological dimensions of texts, institutions, social practices, and cultural forms such as television and film, in order to reveal their selective interests.* (McLaren:1988:214)

Critical literacy requires that teachers and learners take account of the meanings embedded in texts, hence the 'decoding' process must address overt and covert meanings.

Second, literacy learning requires that teachers and learners recognize the socially constructed nature of knowledge and its place in the social and historical struggle between groups to name their world. Giroux (1981:22-23) suggests education must address this struggle by taking students beyond commonsense, functional understandings of literacy.

> *(Students) need to learn how knowledge is produced and reconstructed, how to theorize, and how to judge knowledge from a class and political perspective. They need to learn the kind of knowledge that promotes social analysis and points to transformative social action.*

Thirdly, from a radical perspective literacy is only marginally about reading and writing in the functional sense. Writers such as McLaren, Shor, Lankshear, Freire and Macedo, locate literacy at the centre of a struggle for power and autonomy. This struggle takes place at 'the intersection of language, culture, power and history' (McLaren:1988:229). As Freire says literacy is about reading 'words' and 'worlds'; the words being representations of the multiple and complex worlds individuals and groups live out, with all of their histories, languages, cultures and relations of power. Of the three views of literacy considered in this review, only the view with an emancipatory interest will comprehensively accommodate questions which ask whose rights will prevail in the literacy learning process and how social and classroom practices legitimate, through language and knowledge production, the rights of some over others. These two questions address which histories, languages and cultures are more highly valued.

Within the teaching and learning process described above one aspect of classroom practice is the texts used. From a critical perspective the standard texts and resource materials of adult literacy programs establish the framework within which knowledge will be produced and/or reproduced. Existing texts largely reflect the histories and ideologies of dominant groups in society. They tend to portray an individualist view of 'disadvantage' which locates causes of 'disadvantage' with the individual as a

function of 'motivation' and 'natural' ability, and tend to ignore social, political and economic factors. Consequently texts must also be considered as teachers begin to establish critical literacy classrooms.

In his analysis of literacy perspectives, McLaren (1988) suggests functional and cultural perspectives present as unproblematic the socially constructed nature of knowledge and meaning. Functional and cultural perspectives reinforce the notion of an objective reality that exists separate from the influence of individuals, and also support the idea that there is a pattern and predetermined order to the social world (Morgan:1980). In functional and cultural perspectives this social 'order' is assumed to address the needs and interests of all social groups in an objective and fair fashion.

2.4 Problems with categories of literacy

While McLaren's perspectives of functional, cultural and critical literacy expand understandings of the different forms literacy might take, Brodkey (1986), Horsman (1989) and Street (1984) among others contend that any debate about the 'il/literate' is in danger of constructing a group permanently defined as the 'other'. This disempowers those with limited literacy skills by adding another dimension, the political, to the list of deficit ways in which the 'literate' and 'illiterate' participate in society.

Horsman (1989:111-2) suggests this disempowerment occurs by a number of means. Primarily the experience of the 'illiterate' is usually presented through the eyes of the 'literate', and in perpetuating a broad spread of definitions the number of people classified as 'illiterate' is increased.

As Brodkey (1986:47) puts it

> *Because all definitions of literacy project both a* ***literate self*** *and an* ***illiterate other****, the tropics of literacy stipulate the political as well as the cultural terms on which the "literate" wish to live with the "illiterate".* (original emphasis)

Debates about 'proper' or 'improper' literacy (Lankshear with Lawler:1987), 'functional', 'cultural' or 'critical' literacy (McLaren:1988), and 'autonomous' or 'ideological' literacy (Street:1984) assist practitioners to understand the variety of forms literacy might take. Such debates accentuate the multiplicity of forms literacy takes, however, such debates must also be recognized as defining the 'il/literate' in ways which may fail to recognize the richness of their lives or the pervasive way in which literacy emerges as a function of the social and political context of the 'literate' in society who tend to initiate and control the naming and defining process.

2.5 Critical perspectives of classroom practice

The preceding section briefly discussed three basic ways in which literacy and literacy use is conceptualized. Conceptualizing literacy in these three ways highlights a central focus of this thesis: the social construction of knowledge and the way in which forms of knowledge produced in the classroom are a function of teacher and student negotiation. The extent of teacher/student negotiation of content and process establishes which of the three forms of literacy, or hybrids thereof, will prevail in the classroom.

In reviewing the state of professional development in adult literacy programs Kazemak (1988:464) proposed that

1 adult literacy is often based on misconceived notions of literacy, inappropriate methodologies and a naivete concerning political and social realities;
2 while much has been learned about adult literacy little has been translated into effective practice;
3 adult literacy professionals must begin to address the above gaps.

In a more recent essay review of adult literacy publications Kazemak (1990:58) again bemoaned the continuation of the 'meagre theoretical base of adult literacy education'. More often than not adult literacy teaching is disconnected from a 'pedagogy of empowerment' (Simon:1987:372), which acknowledges the struggle for meaning taking place between learners, teachers and texts. Fueyo (1988:107) suggests that some adult literacy tutors continue to see their students merely as

> *economic beings whose goals are job security and advancement. In the classroom (their) literacy is reduced to ... mechanical manipulation of a graphic code.*

In addition Fingeret (in Kazemak:1990:1) notes that

> *most of the present adult literacy programs are constrained by their underlying philosophy, which does not give learners a voice in the conduct of the program.*

Similarly Bruss and Macedo (1985:7) believe that

> *many literacy programs, especially the competency based programs ... overemphasize the technical acquisition of reading and writing skills.*

Programs based on functional and cultural approaches to literacy alone have the potential to encourage teaching practices which constrain attempts at encouraging learners to make sense of knowledge as a function of struggles to name the world.

Negotiated learning strategies and student and selfdirected learning are classroom practices in adult literacy that have emerged from a liberal humanist approach to adult education. It is a contention of this thesis that while adhering to these practices

teachers still maintain a strong position of control in the adult literacy classroom. A 'teaching', rather than 'pedagogical' orientation actively, if unwittingly, supports the maintenance of unnecessary unequal relations of power, through teaching practices which mask the teacher's 'natural' authority acquired by association with traditional schooling practices.

The very nature of adult literacy classes establishes an unequal educational relationship between teacher and learner in terms of knowledge, expectations of the learning process gained from initial schooling (Westwood: 1980) and ability to negotiate these expectations as concrete outcomes. Adults enter adult literacy classes with histories of what can fairly be described as limited prior educational success within formal systems. Adult literacy teachers are largely responsible for establishing classroom climate; this may or may not include encouraging adult students to see themselves as having a more active role in classroom content and process.

When teachers establish a climate where students are more involved in decision making there is a danger that the students will conclude that their stated needs are not being met. Wallerstein (1983:np) notes that students 'simply stop coming' rather than addressing their dissatisfaction with the teacher. Nevertheless for Wallerstein it is the responsibility of the teacher to address both the immediate needs of the students as well as establishing ways of operating in the class so that the prevailing views of knowledge and power relations are made problematic.

The above description of adult literacy students is not meant to suggest they are 'fragile' learners or incapable of articulating their needs. (4) It merely suggests that dominant schooling practices have shaped expectations of educational practice; the conservative nature of these expectations is prominent in the continuation of largely traditional classroom practices in adult literacy classes (Kazemak:1988).

2.6 Teachers' questions in the classroom

There is a limited amount of empirical research which addresses the emancipatory claims of radical theorists and the methodological implications such claims might have for classroom practice. Additionally, research using a critical framework is often accused of being distanced from the lived realities of the field, and those for whom it is intended to 'empower'. (See Ellsworth (1989), Clarke (1990) and Lather (1988).) Research into classroom practice has established that teachers' talk dominates classroom interaction (Young:1987, Perrott:1988, Dillon:1988). Therefore teacher talk is a useful place to begin to examine how the emancipatory claims of radical educators might be realized.

There is little doubt that teachers' questions play an important part in shaping classroom interaction and learning, however it is a complex area of study. Like van der Meij (in Comber:1990:7) I would have "thought twice" about undertaking research into questioning had I been aware of the complexity of the field.

Hyman (in Dillon:1982a:128) suggests 'it is impossible to conceive of teaching without asking questions'. Aschner (in Gall:1970:707) suggests that the asking of questions is 'one of the basic ways by which the teacher stimulates student thinking and learning'.

Furthermore Dillon (1982:128) notes that

> *[q]uestions are not only a frequent but predominant (teaching) technique; they are also the preferred technique for stimulating student thought and discussion.*

While the above writers have focussed their attention on teachers' practices in schools, Brookfield (1987:15) suggests that through questions adult educators along with counsellors are involved in 'identifying and challenging assumptions' and 'exploring and imagining alternatives' and Freire (in Bruss and Macedo:1985:9) suggests educators should develop a 'pedagogy of questions', rather than a 'pedagogy of answers'. He is implying here that although teachers are using questions in the classroom they are questions for which they already have the answers.

This review will focus on specific aspects of teacher questions which help to better understand how power relations and knowledge production emerge through classroom interaction initiated by questions in both schooling and adult education.

Most relevant to this research are three aspects of questioning: the classification systems used to identify teachers' questions, sequences of questions, and the patterns of questioning emerging in classrooms. These areas are examined in the next section, and in the following section I will summarize this research and its contribution to the development of critical literacy teaching.

2.7 Teachers' questions: classification systems

For some time classification systems have been forwarded as a means of identifying and quantifying teachers' questions. Bloom's taxonomy would be the most well-known of these classification systems. (See Figure 1. below.)

Knowledge	recognition and recall of facts
Comprehension	interprets and translates, summarizes or paraphrases given information, requires knowledge in order to demonstrate comprehension.
Application	uses information in a situation different from the original learning context; requires comprehension of knowledge in order to apply in a new situation.
Analysis	separates the whole into parts until the relationship among elements is clear; requires ability to apply information in order to analyse.
Synthesis	combines elements to form new entity from original one; requires analysis in order to synthesize.
Evaluation	involves acts of decision making, judging or selecting based on criteria and rationale; requires synthesis in order to evaluate.

Figure 1 Bloom's Taxonomy
(American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials: 1989)

In theory, working through Bloom's taxonomy assists students to examine various and increasingly more complex perspectives of an issue. Reference to Bloom's taxonomy is not meant to suggest its adequacy as a classification system; it is presented here because it is frequently referred to as a guide for teacher questioning. Inadequacies in the taxonomy are not able to be discussed here but they are explored by Calder (1983).

While cognitive taxonomies in general are useful in identifying types of questions asked by teachers, Gall (1970) further elaborates the inherent flaws in taxonomic approaches. First, researchers are not automatically able to infer student processes used to answer a question from the categorization of a teacher's question. Additionally taxonomic analysis assumes that asking a particular type of question will elicit an answer of like cognitive level **and** that students might move on to ask similar such questions themselves.

Second, while taxonomies may cover important educational objectives others may be addressed in only a cursory fashion. Taxonomies highlighting cognitive processes may not draw attention to the procedural aspects of classroom organization or how students are developing problem solving strategies or attitudes.

Third, taxonomies tend to identify teacher questions in use rather than examining the effectiveness of different questions in different contexts. Hence they have a preoccupation with what is, rather than what might be.

2.8 Teachers' questions: sequences

In 1970 Gall suggested that the sequencing of questions, and follow up questioning strategies, were further areas of possible research which would enhance educators' understandings of classroom interaction and learning.

Sequencing has been addressed by Hilda Taba (see Joyce and Weil:1986), who identified a sequence of questions which assists students to explore curriculum topics to increasingly abstract levels. More pertinent to this study her work has been adapted by Nina Wallerstein (1983) to accommodate adult non-English speaking background (NESB) learners. Wallerstein's framework differs from the sets of questions reviewed by Gall (1970), and Taba's original categories. Her framework is overtly embedded in a social and political context specifically addressing the needs of NESB adults, and is intended to 'empower' the students involved.

Wallerstein uses a 'problem-posing' (Freire:1970) approach which takes as the focus of learning the conflicts which present as part of learners' everyday lives. This approach sequences classroom interaction at two levels and is explicitly designed to 'problempose', that is explore the complexity of the setting, rather than solve problems in the first instance. The first level of questioning involves three general stages: listening, dialogue, and action. Listening establishes the students' lives as the central concern of the classroom interaction. The second level of questioning is embedded in the 'dialogue' stage and involves five types of questions. The third and final stage is action, which results from the dialogue of stage two.

Stage one: listening

Listening requires that teachers know and become a part of the socio-cultural, political and economic life of the student. In this way they are able to more clearly understand the relevance of issues to students' lives. Questions are clearly relevant to this phase however they are not Wallerstein's major concern. Her 1983 work focuses on questioning sequences generating dialogue in
stage two.

Stage two: dialogue

Dialogue is central to Wallerstein's work and is at the heart of radical discourses of education (Freire:1970, Shor:1980, Allman:1990). Dialogue assumes two-way communication, free of overt or covert coercion, and is aimed at peeling away the taken-for-granted assumptions inherent in understandings of the social world. Through the Freirean notion of dialogue (Shor & Freire:1987:102) students develop a critical view of their lives, informed by the political, socio-cultural and economic factors which shape their actions. It is much more complex than the commonsense notion of discussion between individuals. Shor (in Shor & Freire:1987:99) believes that traditional discourse, or what I have referred to above as discussion, 'confirms the dominant mass culture and the inherited, official shape of knowledge'.

In contrast, dialogue intends to 'make the familiar strange and the strange familiar' (McLaren:1989:164) by challenging what we have come to believe is 'natural'. Dialogue takes place in a context of ongoing power relations continually evolving between speakers at any one time, and acknowledges the historical nature of social relations. It interrogates the 'official shape of knowledge' challenging existing ways of knowing; critical questions are central to this interrogation.

Wallerstein (1983) identifies the 'problem-posing' process as a five step inductive questioning process (stage two) however she is careful to point out that the questioning process is always located within a framework of listening and action (stages one and three). She matches Hilda Taba's framework of questioning with elements of Paulo Freire's problem-posing process. (See Figure 2. below.)

	TABA	FREIRE
Step 1	literal description	naming the problem
Step 2	affective response	how do people feel about the problem
Step 3	inferences	'Why questions', asking for causes (of the problem)
Step 4	generalizations	questions about social context
Step 5	application and evaluation	what should be done

Figure 2. Wallerstein's comparison of Freire's and Taba's questions

This questioning process, which aims to stimulate critical thinking, is 'not random'. Its purpose is to identify issues relevant to the lives of the learning group and more importantly to indicate the connection between individual lives and social conditions - what Mills (1959:8) calls the 'personal troubles of milieu' and 'the public issues of social structure' respectively. The questions emerge from 'codes'. A code is 'a projective device that is emotionally laden and identifiable to students' (Wallerstein:1983:19). It emerges from the listening stage and can take illustrative or even textual form, although the former is more common in the literacy teaching methods adopted by Freire. This 'code' or visual representation becomes the classroom 'text' and the focus for classroom discussion.

Wallerstein further proposes a series of questions which explore issues within the code and relate them to students' lives. In this way 'private troubles' are connected to social conditions and possible forms of action to address the troubles are then examined. Wallerstein's questioning categories are shown in Figure 3. below.

1 **What do you see?**
Designed to elicit concrete details of the issue embedded in the 'code'

2 **What is the problem here?**
Designed to explore as many issues as possible in the 'code'

3 **Is this your problem?**
Designed to connect the issue to individual lives - student feelings and experiences

4 **Why is there a problem?**
Designed to 'fit this individual experiences into a larger historical, social or cultural perspective.'

5 **What can you do?**
Designed to elicit courses of action to 'provide a new perspective on this problem or in some way ameliorate it'

Figure 3. Wallerstein's questions (1983).

Wallerstein's work provides a useful framework for examining the exploration of knowledge in classrooms. She identifies relevance to students' lives and connection between individual and social worlds as key elements of critical thinking in the emancipatory sense.

In establishing a set of questioning categories which she calls 'tools for dialogue', she seeks to provide a set of questions which will lead learners to question the taken-for-granted of their everyday lives, as do Freire's set of questions. As mentioned previously Taba's questions and other taxonomies reviewed by Gall (1970) do not make the political links between individual experience and the social conditions shaping that experience and as such these frameworks are not explicitly about challenging relations of power embedded in issues under discussion in the classroom.

Stage three: action

The third phase in the problem-posing process is action. It entails examining ways to act on an issue as a result of searching analyses and connections with individual lives. 'True' emancipatory action emerges from the dialogue of the second stage, which is a free and frank exploration of 'possibilities'; its intention being to transcend the limits imposed by social conditions as Shor (in Lather:1989) advocates.

Brookfield (1987) takes up many of the issues Wallerstein raises. He recognizes that learners' lives are central to the process of adult education and that classroom interaction should lead to alternative ways of viewing the world. Brookfield explores further a series of 'qualities' teachers must possess if they are to effectively advocate alternative perspectives in the critical classroom. Citing Freire (Brookfield:1987:81) he notes that critical teachers must be competent, courageous, risktakers, with 'humility' and 'political clarity'.

Brookfield (1987:81) elaborates, suggesting for example that

> *competence in communicating clearly with people and in managing group activities democratically is needed to ensure that people understand that alternative interpretations of the world are possible and that participants have a chance to explore these fully.*

Similarly 'political clarity' requires that we 'break free from distorting perspectives imposed by oppressive groups' (Brookfield:1987:82).

But these guidelines for critical teachers are general and teachers must read further afield if they are to examine the methodological complexities of "exploring fully" in detail. Rockhill (1988) in a critical review of Freire and Macedo (1987) suggests that the ambiguity of 'political clarity' is two-fold. First, she agrees there actually are no 'how-tos', the implication of Freire's work, and radical educators generally, is that radical pedagogy emerges in the process of radical practice. Second, while the above may be true to a certain extent Rockhill (1988:115) raises the issue that 'political clarity' unrealistically portrays teaching situations as 'teachers and students against

a common oppressor'. Where women work with men, 'whites' with 'people of colour' and the 'wealthy' with the 'poor' this description is clearly problematic. (5) Thus while not advocating a how-to manual, Rockhill reminds us that a viable radical pedagogy must address issues of difference, and the methodological difficulties they raise, in addition to developing a discourse of the field which is consistent with its espoused practice.

The methodological difficulties of implementation are not completely addressed by Wallerstein either. Her framework suggests ways to explore knowledge and to develop personal change and social transformation. However, as with much radical practice, the procedures by which these issues are addressed are assumed as part of the implicit methodological understandings of radical teachers. Her questioning framework only partially addresses the complex ways in which teachers move from a theory of dialogue to its dialogic practice in classrooms.

In addition the development of a sequenced framework of three stages and five levels of questions is in danger of being coopted as a 'teaching' (Simon:1987) approach to dialogue. While 'how-to' procedures are important it must also be recognised that they reify dialogue as a technique rather than a search for alternative ways of knowing (Allman:1990). As Tennant (1988), and Tennant and Foley (1988) suggest, dialogue requires both reflection and action. The separation of the two in Wallerstein's framework, while useful for practising teachers is also misleading if there are no efforts to integrate the five levels of questioning within each stage of the problem-posing process.

This overview of types of question and how they are used in the classroom has been necessarily limited. It attempts two things. First it raises issues about the usefulness of classification systems as a means of identifying and quantifying the questions teachers use in classrooms. Classification systems will inevitably leave some questions about teachers' questions unanswered. Second, it sets the framework for a dialogic practice of adult literacy, a fundamental aspect of any critical literacy practice.

2.9 Teachers' questions: patterns of questioning

The previous section dealt with categories of questions teachers might ask in classrooms and their sequencing. In this section I explore in more detail how teachers ask questions and the implications of their different practices.

Teachers ask questions for a reason and they do so within the context of other classroom interaction; teachers' questions do not occur in isolation. Analysis of teachers' questions using questioning categories alone is in danger of reducing classroom interaction to a series of question types, often without full recognition of the purposes of questions asked, or not asked, within any given framework, and the context in which those questions are asked.

Research in schools offers useful insights into the teachers' role in establishing a critical classroom where dialogue rather than discussion, or traditional discourse, is the means of exploration. Research on patterns of interaction in classrooms provides further detail of the evolving nature of student-teacher relations. The work of Young (1987, 1984), Dillon (1983, 1988) and Perrott (1988) has been most useful in this study: the former for insights into patterns of interaction examined from a critical perspective, the latter for their information on questioning practices in classrooms.

What emerges from the research of these three writers in particular, but is supported by other researchers in the field (McHoul (1978) and Sinclair and Brazil (1982)), are patterns of interaction which repress student inquiry. This 'norm against student questions' (Dillon:1981) is the antithesis of a critical practice of adult literacy.

These patterns can be identified by the amount of teacher talk, amount of student talk, patterns of interaction, the extent to which talk is initiated by the respective participants and the opportunities participants have to contest the meanings and forms of knowledge generated by classroom talk.

While actual percentages vary among researchers, as much as 80% of formal talk in classrooms is undertaken by teachers (McHoul:1978:208). The effect of this asymmetric balance in participation

> *keeps the teacher not only holding the floor but also directing and controlling the ideas and meanings that are exchanged* (Perrott: 1988:16).

A breakdown of formal talk in classrooms reveals that teachers ask as many as one question per minute while students ask 'one question per pupil per month' (Dillon:1983:37). Teachers provide counter questions to student questions two-thirds of the time in elementary schools (Mischler:1975). That is each time a student asks a question the teacher is likely to reply with a question 67% of the time.

While frequency of questioning contributes to the controlling process described by Perrott (1988) the spacing of questions is also significant. Rowe (in Dillon:1983:38) reveals that teachers generally speak one second after a student's response.

This asymmetric pattern of teacher talk and questioning behaviour in the classroom distorts interaction and throws doubt on the usefulness of teacher questioning as a means of exploring and expanding student understandings of traditional knowledge claims during classroom activities. The intention of critical teaching is to expose the ways in which knowledge is produced and how different forms of knowledge operate to support the continued dominance of particular social groups. The above patterns of talk suggest students have limited input into the direction or content of classroom talk, and further research by Dillon and Young support this.

Dillon (1982b:57) suggests teachers have traditionally had the following intentions for student learning through using discussion. They want to:

1 give students a chance to express themselves
2 allow students to hear the opinions of others
3 provide opportunities to re-evaluate ideas and attitudes on the basis of others' views
4 provide teacher with background information which assists the educational process.

But if teachers speak in questions Dillon (1983:12) believes there are four consequences for student responses:

1 students speak in answers
2 students respond only to the question asked
3 social constraints allow the teacher a right of reply which might include comment, evaluation or the posing of another question
4 students speak in answers to the question thus their classroom interaction is channelled through the teacher.

What emerges from actual classroom interaction is a fairly predictable cycle of talk. The interaction pattern often called the IRF or IRE cycle, has contributed significantly to an understanding of teacherstudent interaction in the classroom. Young (1987) calls it the IRF cycle and I will continue to refer to it as such.

The IRF cycle consists of the following elements:

a teacher's initiation (I)
a student's response (R)
a teacher response (F) - called 'feedback' by Young(1987)

Edwards and Furlong (in Young: 1984:224) suggest that during classroom interaction:

> *(t)he teacher provides a framework into which pupil talk is fitted, and that talk is assessed according to the closeness of fit. Brief pupil contributions are taken as representative of the group, and the interaction then proceeds as though the other pupils either know already, or shared the same and now correct inadequacies as those who spoke.*

Young (1987:125) notes that the IRF cycle constitutes 60% of classroom talk. If as much as 80% of formal talk is undertaken by teachers (McHoul:1978:208) and 60% of that talk is embedded within IRF cycles beginning with a teacher initiation then there is little room for 'dialogue' which contests 'the official shape of knowledge' (Shor:1987:99).

In patterns of classroom interaction the IRF cycle influences knowledge production in three ways (Young:1984 :226). First, teacher and student contributions enter the classroom with different authoritative status attached. Second, actual occasions to

talk are unequal, with the teacher having control over the turn taking structure embedded in the classroom talk. Third, the feedback element of the cycle which generates new talk is controlled by the teacher.

Young (1984:223) believes the IRF establishes unequal claims on knowledge and production of knowledge.

> *Teachers ... ask more than 90% of questions and pupils between them share the rest.*

Initiation of classroom talk is controlled by the teacher, and largely determines student talk emerging from classroom interaction. Student responses are guided by the degree of fit with the framework developed by the teacher; as Young (1987:129) notes 80% of official student talk comprises answers to teachers' questions.

The following alternatives, offered by Dillon, Perrott and Young, suggest the types of strategies that can produce a more equitable distribution of the source of initiation of classroom interaction and production of classroom knowledge.

Dillon (1984:55) found that alternative strategies assisted secondary students to talk more, to ask more questions of other students, to participate in discussion, to talk with other students and contribute topics and experiences beyond the parameters of the lesson, in addition to more 'exploration' and 'speculation'. He outlined the following as a more exploratory form of classroom enquiry. Teachers should:

1 offer statements declaring their interest, opinion or judgement of the issue - rather than ask a question
2 offer a statement which reflects the teacher's own understanding of the student's response
3 establish the teacher's uncertainty by posing a question to identify his or her own confusion
4 ask students to elaborate
5 encourage students to ask questions of each other
6 encourage students to formulate questions to articulate their own uncertainty
7 leave a deliberate silence after student responses.

By adopting the above strategies Dillon believes teachers will be less likely to set up patterns of classroom interaction which are initiated and evaluated by the teacher. A genuine form of inquiry rather than a questioning procedure which establishes cyclical and restrained patterns of social interaction is more likely to be established.

Perrott (1988:chapters 2 and 3) furthers this line of thinking suggesting teachers should:

1 'vacate the floor' by attending to 'wait' and 'pause' mechanisms in their talk
2 encourage verbal interaction between pupils
3 use humour

4 focus the talk for genuine pupil enquiry
5 help pupils extend and elaborate their own ideas and thinking in classroom talk
6 change their approach and response to questions in talk.

She suggests that it is not enough just to ask questions, teachers need to consider how they handle student responses (Perrott:1988:81). Dilion and Perrott highlight the value of being explicit about the teacher's stance on an issue, encouraging students' questions and also the importance of timing of teachers' questions.

While Meyers (1986) supports some of the alternatives offered by Dillon and Perrott, he furthers the range of possibilities for increasing student participation in classroom talk, looking beyond teacher talk to the structural organization of the classroom. He suggests 'reflective classrooms'

1 begin each lesson with a problem or controversy
2 establish silent periods for both teachers and learners to assist in considering new perspectives
3 replace traditional seating arrangements with small group settings
4 run for 2-3 hours rather than the traditional 50-60 minute period
5 provide opportunities for teachers to voice ambiguities and uncertainties

In Meyers' 'reflective classroom' thinking and knowledge production become tentative, exploratory processes free of coercion and predetermined frameworks.

Young furthers examination of the qualitative nature of classroom interaction through the effects of teacher feedback on classroom exploration. His examination of teachers' 'feedback' to student responses has provided strong evidence for the continuing restrictive effect of teacher talk on classroom interaction. This emerges in the form of 'glossing' and 'formulation' practices which need to be explained and understood in terms of the teacher's aim for the lesson. Young (1987) proposes that glossing practices within the lesson, such as 'you know' and 'stands to reason, doesn't it?' establish tacit agreement about what is shared classroom knowledge and the taken-for-granted assumptions which can be made about that knowledge. He suggests glossing practices allow teachers to make assumptions about a common body of classroom knowledge without stating the assumptions in so many words. Students are never explicitly exposed to these assumptions. Teachers establish knowledge claims when they initiate classroom interaction. These claims have higher status than student claims because of the teacher's position of authority in school classrooms and teachers legitimate those claims in covert ways by the use of specific language practices which leave their claims uncontested.

Similarly, formulating practices such as 'So ...', 'therefore' or 'consequently' embed teacher explanations in the authoritative framework of supporting texts and resources. These practices ignore the uncontestable aspects of classroom talk by framing explanations of issues in such a way that their explanatory power is hidden within the established framework of the lesson by either teacher language or association with authoritative texts.

Formulations are embedded within the teacher's talk, and 'work' (Young:1984:228-229) to establish the uncontestable nature of knowledge. This type of formulating practice within the class enhances what Young (1984:230) calls the 'indoctrinating effect' of teacher talk. Such practices have the effect of establishing implicitly the teacher's goal for the lesson and in remaining implicit, allow the teacher's talk to 'mobilis(e) the pupils to engage actively in indoctrinating themselves' (Young:1984 :230). They do this by engaging in the discussion as it is framed by the teacher and may be unaware of the 'hidden agenda' which guides the lesson.

A simpler but more common teacher formulating practice (Young:1987:129) reconstructs student talk to fit the framework provided by the teacher. These reformulating practices might consist of the substitution of favoured terminology or a rewording of students' responses to fit more closely the essence of ideological beliefs presented in teaching texts or resources.

Formulating practices and glossing practices are teacher management techniques aimed at 'channelling, correcting and shaping' (Young:1984:232) classroom interaction to support teachers' knowledge claims. Teachers reformulate student talk and not vice versa, and students are usually not provided with opportunities to critique the teacher's reformulations (Watson and Young:1980:40).

Young (1984) believes these practices provide classroom talk with deceptive 'coherence and direction'. This is a coherence and direction established by the teacher to support prior knowledge claims which are not open to student contestation because within the IRF students have no opportunity to interrogate the teacher's reformulation (Young:1988:57).

Students learn to think within a restricted framework; they become 'cognitive technicians without a trace of critique' (Young:1988:58). They operate within a conceptual framework consistent with the teacher's intentions for the lesson, and may not accommodate other perspectives. This view is further supported by McLaren (1989:161) who suggests that critical thinking within such a controlled context is 'laundered' of its inherent political and cultural dimensions.

2.10 Conclusions

It is clear that teacher questioning plays an important part in establishing patterns of classroom communication. However, contrary to commonsense beliefs about questioning it appears that teachers' questions may actually limit inquiry and mitigate against a process of exploration. Perrott (1988:55) calls this the 'lesson's facade of discussion'.

The teacher questioning practices reviewed here suggest that teachers ask a lot of questions in the classroom and students ask few questions. Teachers believe that

learning is related to questioning by both teachers and students but there is little clear understanding of the types of questions which best support learning. Additionally there is little evidence of students actually asking questions in the classroom.

If 'it is impossible to conceive of teaching without asking questions' (Hyman in Dillon:1982a:129), then clearly educators and teacher educators must become more aware of the impact teachers' questions have on one, how knowledge is produced in classrooms and two, the forms of knowledge emerging from these processes of knowledge production and three, how this knowledge is relevant to student's experience.

Significant to this study is the observation that most teachers are unaware of the ways in which their classroom practice legitimates the asymmetry of knowledge production and power relations in the classroom (Young:1984). This is further supported by research (Susskind in Dillon:1983:37), which indicates that teachers often give inaccurate accounts of what they believe to be the patterns of classroom interaction.

Not only are teachers unaware of their practices, they are unaware of the consequences of such practices. Young (1987:133) compares teachers' practice with a steamroller which rolls on inexorably to the end of the lesson to 'cover the content' regardless of student opinion. With Susskind, Young also notes that teachers may not be aware that this is what they are doing. To address this 'blind spot', Smyth (1987) following Fay suggests that critical perspectives of education must encourage educators to

> *'problematize' (ie problem-pose rather than problem solve), the settings in which they work so as to remove the blinkers that have blinded them from acting in alternate ways.* (Smyth:1987:36)

The implication is that teachers 'problematizing' their practice will reveal the intended and unintended ways in which classroom teaching constrains classroom interaction.

Being unaware of actual practice and the consequences of that practice are observations relevant to the focus of this study, which attempts to connect the emancipatory claims of critical literacy teaching with the methodological issues of classroom implementation, and the necessary staff development required to support dialogic practice.

Teachers may aim to establish a climate of traditional discussion or even of emancipatory dialogue in the classroom but in fact classroom interaction tends towards 'recitation patterns' which Dillon (1984:50) describes as 'recurring sequences of teacher questions plus student answer'. Both Dillon (1982b:88) and Perrott (1988) have forwarded alternative strategies for expanding classroom interaction and these have been outlined briefly in this chapter.

What is most relevant for this study which is underpinned by the challenge of a viable radical pedagogy is that there are two gaps in the existing research literature on questioning practices:

1 very little research has been undertaken to explore questioning practices in adult basic education classrooms
2 few researchers explicitly treat teacher questioning as a political practice.

The study has drawn from classroom work on questioning in schools, which provides insights on questioning practices without addressing broader notions on inequality. While both Dillon and Perrott speak of increasing student involvement in classroom procedures neither is explicit about the political context in which their work is set. Perrott (1988:13), however, is aware that her suggestions for change do not contest the basic reproductive purposes of schooling.

On the other hand in the area of adult education teacher questioning has been viewed from a more political perspective. Brookfield (1987) argues that teaching students to think critically is an 'inherently disruptive' (p90) process and students will inevitably ask 'awkward questions' (p67). Similarly, Paulo Freire advocates a 'pedagogy of the question' which seeks to ask questions for which as teachers we might have no answer. This study attempts to address two gaps in adult basic education research and in the research relating to the political nature of questioning. First, the research on adult literacy teacher questioning practices is thin, and this study reveals some of the practices occurring in one adult literacy classroom. Second, the practices are analysed within a critical literacy framework whereby assumptions about the connections between literacy learning and 'empowerment' are not taken for granted.

In addition it attempts to reveal ways in which adult literacy staff development programs might be informed by information about current questioning practices and how they might be developed into dialogic encounters in the quest of producing, rather than reproducing, knowledge in classrooms.

The study locates teachers and teacher questioning in a complex educational context; one in which teachers' questions are not posed in isolation. The culture of the organization and the political and economic climate of the community pervade the way in which teachers ask questions. A better understanding of these constraints on dialogic encounters may help teachers and teacher educators to 'prepare, pose and ponder' (Dillon:1988:62) their questions in the interests of all learners, literacy students, teachers and teacher educators, understanding their role in contesting and producing knowledge.

Endnotes

1 Throughout this study I refer to radical/critical practice. While recognizing that the radical and critical traditions have different histories and explanatory frameworks the generalization draws on the common threads of the two traditions in terms of their vision for human emancipation.

2 Educational institutions are not the only sites of reproduction or contestation of the status quo, (Bruss & Macedo:1985:15) but wherever change to existing inequities in social relations is sought, the concept of educational empowerment is central.

3 I have indicated the problematic nature of labels like 'literate' and 'illiterate' by using quotes. Neither are adequate descriptions nor are they accurate as literacy and illiteracy are not absolute qualities which define what a person has, does not have or how they use that ability.

4 In addition the term 'fragile' focuses on the deficits of the 'illiterate' and tends to ignore the richness and complexity of their abilities and lives beyond the classroom.

5 The misguided portrayal of unity is in fact two-fold. It suggests as Rockhill (1988) has noted that oppressed groups work unproblematically with 'concerned oppressors' to overcome inequity. It also implicitly suggests there is unity within such oppressed groups to fight towards a common free goal. Both implications do not accurately portray the diversity of ideas and opinions in social groups.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the theoretical and methodological issues which informed the way I conceptualized and implemented the study. I begin by revisiting the theoretical literature outlined in Chapter two, and relate it to research literature in critical social science.

I describe the methodological issues confronted by critical ethnographers including the ethical considerations posed for researchers seeking to address issues of 'human emancipation' within a research project bound by the inter-personal and structural constraints of educational institutions and higher degree awards.

I describe procedures for the production, organization and analysis of data covering the three main areas of data concerned in this study:

1 the contextual detail of the educational setting
2 the categories of teacher questions
3 the patterns of teacher questions

In chapter 4 I present the data used to support the study and in Chapter 5 I outline my reflections on the research process. I have attempted to make explicit the uncertainties and shifts in my thinking while making clear the significant beliefs and values I clung to throughout the process.

3.2 Background to the methodology

Critical approaches

My initial reading prior to the field work focussed largely on writers and researchers advocating critical social science as a means of more completely addressing the complex web of power relations embedded in educational institutions (Giroux (1981, 1983), and McLaren (1989)). These approaches advocate human emancipation; a vision shared by other schools of thought such as Marxism and feminism. While Marxism and feminism clearly address similar issues this study was specifically informed by the writings of American critical theorists working in education and was underpinned by a 'spirit of critique' common to the above three traditions: Marxism, feminism and critical social science. Kenway (1987:4-5) summarizes the major premises of such research traditions as follows:

1 Following Marcuse Kenway believes "unfreedom" is "at the core of things"; social relations are underpinned by unequal relations of power and any explanation which ignores this inequality is inadequate.

2 Knowledge is socially constructed and "unfreedom" is legitimated by shared knowledge and meanings generated by the social interaction within groups. However, the process of legitimation may be hidden in language practices and norms of social interaction such that individuals and groups are unaware of the ways in which they contribute to and systematically maintain unequal relations of power. A spirit of critique attempts to lay bare the processes of how knowledge is socially produced, and how meanings are generated to perpetuate existing social conditions.

3 Subordinate individuals and groups are not passive in the process of legitimating the interests of dominant groups. Dominant social groups may appear to benefit from the perpetuation of existing social relations, however, subordinate members are necessarily implicated in the way these relations are maintained. Power and the maintenance of power is a two-way process implicating the dominant and the subordinate. Both must be considered as agents in the process of contesting and perpetuating power relations.

Within a critical sociological framework analysis of access and equity strategies and educationally empowering procedures provide only partial pictures of the social interaction in an adult literacy classroom; inequitable practices and disempowering strategies are also a part of classroom interaction requiring analysis.

I was further influenced by Patti Lather (1991:13) whose concern is for research practice which acknowledges the ways in which research practices affect our lives. Furthermore, she believes researchers ought to consider how research can avoid the pitfalls of locating participants as the 'other' (1), how useful research outcomes are for participants, and to what extent reports provide a means of changing inequitable social and educational practices.

Following Fay a key assumption of her work (Lather: 1986a:266) is that emancipatory research must

> *encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of the persons being researched at least as much as it is to generate empirically grounded theoretical knowledge.*

In a critical framework research is about change: for both researchers and other participants in the research process. It must acknowledge the role of both parties in directing and redirecting events. For Lather (1991:12) the issue is how to develop methodological approaches to research to 'generate new ways of knowing that interrupt power imbalances'. She views methods as 'politically charged' rather than mere means by which data is collected on the 'outside world'.

I chose ethnographic methods as the basis of this study and my research framework was influenced by the limited methodological literature available on critical ethnography. (See Anderson:1989, Brodkey:1987, Simon and Dippo:1986, Thomas:1983.) The following section explains how this literature shaped the research framework.

Critical ethnography

This study began as a critical ethnography. I believed it would be an ethnography because I intended to "live with" and describe the cultural life of an adult literacy teacher and the students in her class. I wanted to reconstruct the life of the group as it unfolded during the time of this study.

I believed it was 'critical' because a central element of analysis involved examining the way in which participation and negotiation in the class were structured explicitly and implicitly through the teacher's questions. As I moved through the various stages of the study I began to realize the complexity of this type of research.

Historically (Rist:1980) ethnographic research involved a considerable period of time spent in the field becoming accustomed to the underlying values and "deep meanings" embedded within a socio-cultural and political system. Ethnographers gained professional status as they emerged from 'the traditional "rite of passage" - a prolonged field study' (Rist:1980:9). Within this framework research problems evolved from prolonged contact with the site, and explanatory theories about social interaction emerged from "grounded" observations of the life of the group.

In contrast this study was undertaken by a novice researcher, over a ten week period and the research 'question' had been focussed before the study began. I began with 'a theory' about classroom interaction, although it is useful to bear in mind that this theory emerged from my own experience as an adult literacy teacher and contact with others in the field. I set out to 'produce' data which would generate new ways of understanding classroom interaction so that teachers might be encouraged to analyse critically their practices in order to reveal the ways in which they constrained ways of operating and knowing in classrooms. The latter, ways of knowing, refers to ways of producing knowledge and ways of connecting that knowledge to student experience.

Simon and Dippo (1986) believe conventional interpretive ethnographies organize and explain social interaction. Critical ethnography

> *transforms this procedure into a particular one by supplying it with additional perspectives, principally historical and structural, that alter the ethnographic project toward one which supports an emancipatory as well as hermeneutic concern. (Habermas: 1971) This makes it a procedure with a* ***pedagogical and political*** *interest.* (1986:201) (my emphasis)

Critical ethnographers are concerned with revealing the ways in which social interaction perpetuates political and economic dominance.

But critical ethnography offers other insights as well. Individual understandings of social relations may not always reveal the complexity of competing interests or the way in which individual behaviour subverts emancipation. When critical ethnographers 'generate insights', 'explain events' and 'seek understandings' (Anderson:1989:253) their purpose is to reveal not only what is said but also what is left unsaid, about understandings of social reality. As Anderson (1989:253) points out

> *informants' reconstructions of social reality are often permeated with meanings that sustain powerlessness and that people's conscious models exist to perpetuate as much as to explain, social phenomena.*

Analyses of such reconstructions tell us what we do as individuals to contest or perpetuate relations of power.

In summary critical ethnographies allow the contradictory patterns of interaction between individuals to be explored more completely within a theoretical account of classroom interaction which acknowledges the asymmetric nature of power relations between students and teachers.

In this study I asked questions about a teacher's questions and the role these questions played in establishing ways of operating in classrooms and developing understandings of knowledge. I asked questions about the teacher's role in structuring social relations in the classroom as well as about the role students played in expecting and accepting that structuring.

Following Simon and Dippo (1986:200) this study outlines 'data production' and analysis procedures. (See sections 3.5, 3.6, 3.7.) Consistent with the 'critical' intent of the study section 3.3 briefly addresses methodological issues which are taken up more thoroughly in Chapter 5. Given the limited period of time spent in the field and the selective focus on the teacher in the study, rather than all participants in the class, the study is best portrayed as a description and analysis of a teacher's questions in one adult literacy classroom using ethnographic methods and informed by critical theory analysis.

3.3 Methodological issues

The preceding understandings of critical social science research and more specifically critical ethnography influenced me as I began the research. I was concerned with the inequitable nature of social relations, the socially constructed nature of knowledge and the role dominant and subordinate groups play in producing knowledge and meanings which perpetuate inequity. The methodology in this study was designed to foreground the ways in which the teacher directed and redirected classroom interaction and established an approach to knowledge exploration.

My theoretical and conceptual understandings both helped to develop an 'idealized framework' (Troyna & Foster :1988:297) within which to operate. Theoretical

understandings enabled me to account for ways of operating while conceptual understandings assisted me to think about how the study and associated issues were to be linked in practice.

In theory Kenway (1987:5) notes, research which proposes to address human emancipation must address the complexity of issues at hand:

> *the research which is held to be most rigorous acknowledges and indicates the intricacy of both the social totality and its inter- relationships and of individual psychology.*

Thus simple descriptions and limited explanations of social interaction become counter-productive to the spirit of critique. The methodology incorporated ethnographic methods which produced information reflecting the complexity of classroom life in this study. But the research was also necessarily focused on a teacher's questions to accommodate the limited scope of this study. A thorough analysis of data was consistently thwarted by the size of the study making it difficult to account for the intricacy of issues present.

In conceptualizing the research I was interested in developing

> *a form of collaborative research with the teacher that would address (her) concerns, involve (her) in the research process and be aimed, at least in part, at improving classroom practices.* (Troyna and Foster 1988:291)

While I sought 'co-investigation' rather than mere 'cooperation' (Kyle & McCutcheon:1984:174) the extent of 'co-investigation' in the study described here was limited by a number of 'conflicting constraints' (Troyna & Foster:1988:295) on both teacher and researcher. These included time and resources, teacher and researcher expectations of the process and the outcomes, and the ways in which the researcher's 'academic status' legitimated the findings produced, and potentially silenced the teacher's understandings of the findings. Such constraints resulted in pragmatic choices which were not always consistent with teacher or researcher ideals as we had initially conceptualized them.

This study does not address methodological issues involved in doing research into adult literacy teaching practices, however the research methods used are central to the 'credibility' (Guba and Lincoln:1985) of descriptions and analyses produced in any study.

The methodological issues most relevant to this study are best addressed in Chapter 5 once the empirical aspects of the study have been outlined. They included the following:

1 establishing correctives to researcher understandings
2 challenging the 'naturalness' of social arrangements in the classroom
3 being explicit about contradictory practices in both the teaching and the research process

4 including teacher insights in emerging analyses
5 attempting to use emerging understandings to inform practice.

In the next section I will describe how I undertook the study. I provide a brief description of the project, the teacher, the organization, the students and the class. Appendix A gives a more complete description of each of the above sections and provides raw data to support the descriptions. In the following sections I also I describe the methods used to produce the data and the procedures I undertook to analyse data on teaching context, teacher's questions and questioning patterns.

3.4 The study

The project: an overview

I undertook the field work for this study in the months of April, May and June in 1990. The class ran for a ten week block consistent with the DETAFE terms at the time and the study was undertaken in term 2 in the 1990 year. The class itself was of three hours duration and there was usually a coffee break about one and a half hours into the period.

I worked in a participant-as-observer role with an experienced adult literacy practitioner. I believed with Denzin (1978:182-3) that

> *[p]articipant observation is a commitment to adopt the perspective of those studied by sharing their dayto-day experiences ... (it combines) document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection*

and is particularly suitable for social settings which are in a state of change.

The teacher was responsible for both teaching and coordinating an adult literacy program in a DETAFE college in metropolitan Adelaide. I visited the class over a period of 10 weeks and used both 'interactive' and 'noninteractive' methods (Goetze & LeCompte:1988) to generate detail of classroom life. This involved 'interactive methods' whereby researcher participation was likely to influence data produced: for example, field notes of interaction before, during and after the class, interviews with the teacher, and the students in her class, and tape recordings of structured classroom discussions within the lesson period.

The latter recordings provided transcripts of classroom talk and analysis of the transcripts is the central focus of discussion in this report. 'Non-interactive' methods involved collection of artefacts including teacher planning for individual students, information about student histories, details of teacher planning and resources used for the class activities, and examples of student work.

The teacher

I had known the teacher for 12 years and began my own literacy work as a volunteer tutor in her program. She has been an adult literacy teacher/co-ordinator for 13 years and her work has taken her to many other DETAFE colleges to participate in teaching, research and consulting activities. She has however, been based at the same college for most of her adult literacy career.

She is considered to have had extensive experience and expertise in the field of adult literacy and when I approached her, she was keen to be involved in the project so she could "think more about her practice". See Appendix A for further detail of how I selected the teacher and background to her literacy teaching experience.

Later on in the project her enthusiasm had dwindled somewhat as she faced the difficult task of exploring her practice with another person at a time when she was also under intense professional pressure. In week six she said

> *You are taking up my time and it's a bit annoying at the time. It's not you that's annoying, it's that I've got all these other things to do that's making it annoying, which I didn't have before (the study began). Who was to know?*

The organization

Selection of a college site was automatically determined in selecting the teacher and in this study the site had a significant bearing on the development of the project. Many DETAFE colleges, including this college were undergoing significant review, in part because of attention to award restructuring and reskilling within the institutions. Adult literacy staff in some other colleges were experiencing changes regarding employment expectations as I found out from personal communication with an adult literacy co-ordinator at another college. The adult literacy program in this study however, faced additional threats to funding throughout the period of my involvement in the class. (See Appendix A, section 3, for further details.)

The duties and responsibilities of the adult literacy coordinator were to a certain extent driven by these pressures during the study. Her teaching was influenced as were the options faced by literacy students in her class as they made choices about their future programs.

During the period of the study the teacher thought the administrative demands were particularly heavy.

> *Just lately we have been having terrible funding problems, the worst funding problems I've ever had... that first lesson I had to do (after the cuts), I really couldn't concentrate on what was happening with the lesson, I was so upset because we were told our funding was going to be halved for the year. That funding issue goes on all the time. We have had to talk to students about it, you know, they might be going to lose classes and you have to make them aware of it.*

... if I didn't have to worry about that funding issue, I'd put more time into preparing for the class. ...

Half the time I'm running in on a Tuesday spending the time talking to the principal about funding and then quickly rushing through my lesson prep. ... if I wasn't having those political battles I would be a much more effective teacher. I would be listening more to the students too and choosing better articles for them to discuss, more interesting things for them to read and I just feel like I'm, you know, that class is going quite well because they are all going quite well, but I don't feel like I'm giving them as interesting stuff as they could have.

In week 5 of the study I noted that the hour preceding the class - normally a time for teacher preparation was taken up by three phone calls related to the funding crisis, discussion about the viability of existing classes with staff teaching in the program and a discussion with a Senior Lecturer in the College who was reviewing ways to rationalize the coordinator's teaching time, interview time and administrative duties.

The students

This project involved working with the teacher and one of the classes for which she was responsible. There were ten students in the class, nine of them women. The age distribution was wide (16 - 67 years) as was the sociocultural and educational profile (see Appendix A, section 5). There were no compulsory requirements on any students to attend classes: one woman had been attending for six months and another for about a year, 5 women and one young man had joined the class in the early part of 1990 and had been attending for about three months, one woman joined the class in the fifth week of the project. While the class profile appeared to be no different from other classes she had taught, the teacher believed this group had common needs and was different in terms of their attendance and social interaction:

Basically that group clicks. For some reason they all get on really well together and they support each other. They like coming for the company ... they need the support of other women, they enjoy the discussions and they all seem to be on about getting enough self-confidence to get back into the workforce or achieve better at the job they've got. That must be why they keep coming. They fit well together.

The class

The class period consists of three distinct phases: phase one when students are involved in work set to address individual needs, phase two which consists of a discussion directed by the teacher, phase three where students continue their individual work and are tested on various aspect of literacy they have identified. See Appendix A section 9 for further description.

3.5 Data production: the context

The study entailed examining one teacher's questions with the intention of critically analyzing their influence on student participation and exploration of knowledge. A teacher's questions do not occur in isolation so I employed ethnographic methods to develop a richer 'as lived' picture of classroom interaction and the context of the teacher's questions. I observed complete class periods through the various phases (see Appendix A for a full description of the three distinct phases of a class session described above) interviewing the teacher and students as well as participating in one staff development activity.

The next section outlines how I produced data to describe the teaching context. I then detail data production and analysis of teacher questioning (section 3.6) and patterns of questions (section 3.7) respectively.

3.5.1 The methods

There were three methods used to produce data on the context of this study: a reflective journal which began before the collection of data, observation field notes, recordings of interviews and contextual summaries of field notes and interviews. This section describes each of these and then details procedures for analyzing and corroborating my analysis.

Reflective journal

I kept a journal to track the assumptions I was making about classroom interaction and to log changes in my perceptions and understandings as the project evolved.

From my first contact with the teacher I began to make journal entries detailing my impressions, and tentative theories and frameworks to explain my observations. Entries were made on an ad hoc basis: after class, during the week, before I returned to class. For example in week 5 I noted

> *A lot of things appear to happen (during discussion) but are not taken up and explored further. In the session on self-esteem ... students began to talk and then stopped. They did not persevere later when there was a gap in the conversation. Whatever they were going to say was left unsaid. ... A number of times consensus of opinion was implied (by the teacher) but couldn't be reasonably drawn as many students hadn't expressed an opinion.*

I returned to these journals often as I began to develop accounts of classroom interaction.

Observation field notes

My own field notes included descriptions of classroom interaction between participants, and teacher preparation and program administration before, during and after the class. During each class period I initially sat at the same table each week setting up a tape recorder and a notebook which was left open throughout the class. The notebook

was accessible to students if they wanted to look at what I had written; few did so. I noted classroom seating arrangements, students present and communication between individuals. But I continually felt the tension between what Stacey (1988:23) describes as 'authentic, related person (i.e. participant), and as exploiting researcher (i.e. observer)'.

In introducing the research to the teacher and the students I had said I would participate in the class as an adult literacy teacher. I outlined the purpose of the research, and made it clear that although the research design had been developed there would inevitably be changes along the way which they or I might wish to make if the study interfered with the goals they had identified for literacy classes. However as Goetze and LeCompte (1984:111) note, interactive methods of data collection create difficulties for novice ethnographers who are unable to "get it all down". It was not always possible to fulfil the expectations of students, who saw me as a 'helping teacher', and at the same time keep comprehensive records of classroom interaction. I resolved the constant tension between recording observations and participating as a teacher in the class by using audio recording procedures during the discussion period. These procedures are described more comprehensively in the next section. I took field notes during phase one and three of the class session and balanced this with teaching demands such as spelling checks and clarification of literacy activities which had been set by the teacher as they arose.

Observations provided two different pictures of classroom interaction. They gave an overall picture, attempting to capture the structure of the period in terms of movement around the class, interaction between students, and between the teacher and students and the literacy tasks attempted. Observations also provided finer detail. During the discussion period field notes were more specific, detailing non-verbal behaviour in conjunction with classroom talk. This data clarified confusion in the tape transcripts and added visual detail not collected by the taping. It included nonverbal gestures, seating arrangements, teacher movement around the class, student movements, interruptions by other college staff and reflections and questions that were taken up in my journal.

On completion of the discussion phase field notes again became general, detailing student movement in and out of the class, specific requests for help, movement by the teacher, and brief glimpses of conversation between the teacher and students.

In addition to classroom observations I made notes of interviews with students. The nature of these interviews varied. Some were formal - in weeks 3 and 5 I interviewed 2 students in a room away from the main classroom noting reasons for attending classes, their own perception of their skills and abilities, and their beliefs about B as a teacher, with questions such as

> What made you decide to come (to class) in the first place?
> Why are you here now?
> What is B doing with you?

What do you think she does to help you?
How have (specific strategies) helped?
Is there anything she says or does that makes you feel she runs the class well?

At other times I asked students during the class period about their work and their understanding of tasks they were completing. On returning to my desk I made notes which were written up after class.

Interview recording

I used a tape recorder to record three different kinds of data. Classroom discussion was taped during phase two of the lesson; the procedures for this will be described in section 3.6.

I conducted and taped seven interviews with the teacher. I recorded one staff development activity in week nine of the field period. This was the only staff development activity for this term. I recorded it anticipating that it might provide useful data in further understanding the context in which the teacher was operating.

Teacher interviews

Six interviews took place in the teacher's office. In a period of about 50 minutes we were usually interrupted once or twice by the phone and a further one or two times by college staff. Work commitments meant the interviews had to take place in the college after class in order that the teacher could continue to undertake student counselling and administrative tasks on completion of the interviews. The importance and number of work-related tasks determined the length of interviews and the extent to which issues could be taken up in depth. The study made demands on the teacher's time and compounded problems which were emerging at work as a result of the adult literacy funding crisis (see Appendix A section 3). I took the teacher's lead in closing interviews and accepted the constraints imposed on both of us by the demands of work and family commitments.

Interviewing raised other tensions besides time constraints. Following Oakley (1981) I believed that structured interviews would elicit important information. However, they might also exclude rich contextual detail and issues because of my own perception of classroom interaction. I wanted to understand the teacher's construction of life in this classroom as much as my own.

I adopted a 'guided interview' approach (Field and Morse: 1985:67), which uses prepared questions to address issues. However the structure of the interviews was 'guided' by the informant's discussion **and** the interviewer's questions. The interviews became discussions of adult literacy practice, focussing on the classroom in this study but also relating to wider issues in adult literacy provision. I wanted to explore issues about adult literacy practice in addition to specific statements requiring clarification either from classroom incidents, preparation the teacher had undertaken, or comments from previous interviews. In developing a list of questions I was mindful that these were not to predetermine the focus of each interview.

Early guided interview schedules included the following kinds of statements and questions, however, they were often interspersed with lengthy discussion about adult literacy teaching.

I'm interested in what you want to achieve in the class.
How do you go about doing this?
What do you think the outcomes are?
Do you think these are consistent with student goals?
How would you describe your role in the class?
What is different, or special about you? (in comparison to other teachers)

Most interviews took place after the class when the teacher's mind was initially pre-occupied with how the class went and what my understandings of the interaction were. While questions from my list were addressed in the early stages of the discussion, we also talked about the previous class, the latest development in the funding crisis and the teacher's understandings of how literacy was being developed by class activities, her specific beliefs about literacy development, and her own experience of staff development.

In later interviews I narrowed the focus to questioning strategies and the teacher's understanding of what she was attempting to do in each class and throughout the course.

Later interviews included the following kinds of questions:

When you ask questions what different purposes are you trying to achieve?
Do you very often know the answers to your (own) questions?
Do different (student) groups influence the questions you ask?
What do you think critical thinking is? (We explored how this relates to questioning practices.)

Some five months after the field period the discussion focussed more specifically on formal analyses of questioning and emerging categories and her responses to these. These interviews served the purpose of 'member checks' (Guba and Lincoln:1985) and are described later in this section where they are linked to my analyses of questioning practices.

Time constraints were still a problem in later interviews because we both had to make special times to meet once the field observation periods had finished. These interviews were still guided rather than structured and discussion related to the teacher's current classes, the progress the women in the original study were making and the effect of the funding constraints on classes offered within the existing college program. A recent move to another area of adult education also provided a new forum in which to discuss the teacher's questioning practices.

Staff development

In the ninth week of observations the teacher undertook a staff development exercise for all part-time staff employed at the college in the adult literacy program. As the co-ordinator of the program she invited a senior lecturer in the college to address the meeting on assessment procedures in the new program.

I obtained permission to record this meeting and took some supporting notes, acting predominantly as an observer, participating only when asked a question. Tape quality was poor and the session was only partially transcribed. See section 4.1.3 for the agenda for this meeting.

Contextual summaries

As the study progressed it became increasingly difficult to manage the bulk of data so often collected in ethnographic studies. Initially I had promised to return transcripts of interviews to the teacher. This proved impossible because of the time needed to transcribe and correct copies. I began to develop summaries of teaching aims and tensions, session organization and staff development experiences which condensed the contextual features of the data. I typed these and left them with the teacher to review at a later date. The summaries were corroborated by the teacher as accurately describing teaching aims and tensions, session organization and staff development experiences.

3.5.2 Analysing and organizing data: the context

Analysis of the teaching in this study was driven by a number of questions. I wanted to explore specific detail about a teacher's questions: number, type and pattern. I also wanted to know:

In what context the teacher asked questions?
What influenced the questions asked?
How students responded to questions?
What functions the questions served?

Additionally I was interested in connecting this information to staff development practices and so the following question also shaped analysis:

What are the implications for adult literacy staff development practices?

Finding comprehensive answers to these questions necessitated exploring such things as the teacher's beliefs about literacy, the institutional environment in which she works, her understandings of the expectations students had about class participation and organization, her experiences of staff development and the gaps she identified.

My analysis procedures are best described as a spiral. I consciously incorporated a number of procedures to assist the process and each visit to the site added new dimensions to explore, and provided opportunities to corroborate or review emerging impressions.

The following sections describe ways in which I came to organize the data produced.

Establishing impressions
Organizing impressions
  peer scrutiny
  member checking
Categorizing interview data
  member checking
  peer scrutiny

Establishing impressions

Data production and analysis were not separate procedures. From the time I entered into negotiations with the teacher I began to form impressions of her situation, her approach to teaching and the constraints operating to influence her practice. Each time I revisited the site I revisited former journal entries of previous impressions. I began early in the study to look for patterns, patterns of what I saw and heard, but also patterns of absence - what was not happening, what was not being done and what was not being talked about in this class. This became a feature of my approach to analysis: what was missing. It reflects Kenway's (1987:6) contention that critique

> *points to gaps, omissions, silences and to internal contradictions and anomalies in bodies of knowledge or indeed any meaning-making practices.*

The 'silences' were informed by the theoretical and conceptual understandings I believed were central to a critical practice of adult literacy, addressed in Chapter 2.

Organizing impressions

Peer scrutiny

I met on a monthly basis with two colleagues to describe my progress, flag impressions and offer interpretations of what I "saw". I did this through short written presentations and "think aloud" sessions. I taped three of these early review sessions to assist me in more completely addressing criticisms. As the research progressed I was able to do this by noting comments and receiving feedback on written work.

The meetings and responses to final drafts of chapters continued throughout data collection and analysis long after the field observations had been completed.
These colleagues served the purpose of critical friends, contesting my emerging impressions, offering alternative explanations and challenging any tendency to organize data prematurely. While supporting my "openly ideological" approach (Lather:1986b) they also challenged me to be more explicit about my theorizing and my practice, suggesting at times that mine was an invasive form of research, that the power relations between the researcher and the teacher in this study were not easily dismissed, and that following Stacey (1988:22) the appearance of collaboration masked the potential for exploitation and betrayal arising from commitments not honoured. (See methodological issues discussed earlier in this chapter and more fully in Chapter 5.)

Member checks

Each week the teacher and I would talk before and/or after the class. Our discussion before class was never taped and often served as a debrief for the ongoing funding crisis. In week 6 I provided overviews of emerging impressions and issues and the teacher gave her response as to their accuracy and adequacy in explaining classroom interaction. These sessions marked the beginning of what Guba and Lincoln (1985) call 'member checks'. The checks enabled me to refine impressions and in combination with critical peer scrutiny they sharpened my focus on the complexities of the context of classroom questioning practices.

The teacher also read and responded to contextual summaries developed from field and journal notes and interview data which addressed teaching aims and tensions, session organization and staff development experiences and reflections.

Other 'member checks' addressed the categorization of the teacher's questions. These are more appropriately addressed in section 3.6.

Categorizing and checking interview data

The procedures of analysis described above focussed my analysis of the interview data. As I read through the transcripts the following major themes recurred frequently, both in response to questions I asked and to comments initiated by the teacher as a result of the semi-formal mode of guided interviews:

- beliefs about literacy development
- teaching aims
- staff development
  - experiences
  - reflections
- classroom practices: past and present
- student profile details
- general purposes of adult education
- external constraints on teaching practice research methodology issues
- explicit teaching strategies

From these discussions I extrapolated teacher statements related to three areas, namely:

- teaching aims and tensions
- teaching session organization
- staff development experiences and reflections

They were returned to the teacher as contextual summaries for her to corroborate as accurate descriptions of the educational context of the study. The summaries were scrutinized by an experienced educational researcher whose task was to examine them for discrepancies and incomplete information. She acted as a critical friend and

assisted in tightening and clarifying the summaries for those not involved in the study. Contextual summaries are presented as data in Chapter 4.

3.6 Data production: a teacher's questions

In the previous section I outlined methods of data production and analysis in establishing the educational context of this study. While this context is central to understanding the research findings it is not the main focus of the study. Two key questions drove this research. I wanted to know:

> What kinds of questions are asked by an adult literacy teacher in the classroom?
> What patterns if any emerge from these questioning practices?

I wanted to examine the research findings in relation to these two questions within the broader educational context and from a radical education viewpoint. I intended to review the implications for staff development programs seeking to extend the control literacy students might have over the social and educational settings in which they were involved.

3.6.1 The methods

Recording of discussions

In all, 8 classroom discussions were taped over a 10 week observation period. Figure 4 provides a list of the topics discussed, the weeks in which they were taped and whether or not they generated a typed transcript.

Week	Taped	Not taped	Transcript no.
1	Introduction to the research	Student biographies	*
2	Aussie Sayings		*
3	Mother's Day		1
4	Biographies of famous women		*
5	Self Image		2
6	Assertiveness		3
7	Letters to the Editor		4
8	Women and Rape		*
9	Multi-function Polis		5
10	Discussion of research and class progress.		*

Figure 4 Recordings of discussions.

I negotiated with both the teacher and the students in the first week of the class to use the tape recorder. At this time there was some concern about using the recorder so I agreed not to use it during that first week. It became apparent though that the use of a recorder was essential to capture classroom talk and identify the questions the teacher asked and the subsequent responses by students.

The teacher and the students agreed to the use of the tape recorder on the condition that it be turned off if anyone requested to speak off the record. I agreed. I sat in the same place each week and placed the recorder on the table in front of me where all students could see it. I had to lean over to turn it on and off; it was clear to all when recording commenced and ceased. (See Chapter 5 for further discussion of the problems associated with recording procedures.)

During the individual study phases of the lesson I discussed student work and responded to comments addressed to me by the students, however during the discussion period I was less of a participant in the class. I chose to remain largely uninvolved in the discussions, taking field notes of interaction and taping classroom talk. The transcripts clearly show where I have contributed to the discussion. While I was not fully participating in discussion I was also not a 'hidden' observer. My presence in the group was obvious and at all times the teacher and the students were aware of my taping and noting procedures.

Recording commenced when students returned from coffee break and were seated in the classroom and ceased as the teacher began organizational activities for the third phase of the lesson. For example in week 5 after the discussion on self-image the teacher rounded off the lesson as follows:

> *All right, well that can all come out in your writing. (to follow up the activity) I'll finish off now and perhaps you can go back to your own writing. Sue and I will come round and do spelling tests. No one seems to have used the computer, S you were going to update yours. Is anyone else doing computer spelling today? Let's go in there now....*

The transcripts were typed, checked for accuracy against the original recording and retyped. I decided not to use computer analysis on the transcripts. The package I had in mind required all data to be coded and entered into a system. This study involved a small number of transcripts (5 for the purposes of question analysis). I did not believe the use of computer analysis would significantly alter the work for this part of the project or increase the quality of the analysis. After retyping I reviewed the tapes a third and sometimes fourth time, listening for contextual cues such as timing, interruptions, teacher's tone of voice and student talk. Checking for contextual cues continued through each of the analysis procedures.

Colleagues suggested videos would be useful, however given the concerns the students voiced about taping procedures, I did not negotiate to video the classes.

3.6.2 Analyzing and organizing the data: a teacher's questions

Defining a question: the first time

To analyse the transcripts a definition of a question was required. An initial examination used a functional definition, that is "an invitation to inquiry". This simple definition proved inadequate as I began to explore the transcripts more fully. Often a question (the syntactic form) was not an invitation to inquiry, rather it signalled a limited set of options from which the student could choose an answer. At times an invitation to inquire was implicit in the teacher's statement. At other times rhetorical questions, which expected no response, were instrumental in eliciting classroom discussion. In other circumstances the teacher's question, whilst not rhetorical, left no room for a student's answer. So a simple invitation to inquiry was an inadequate way to prescribe the data related to the focus of this study.

Despite these limitations the key factor used to identify relevant data initially was that the teacher's talk be an invitation to inquiry, real or rhetorical, while not necessarily being a question grammatically, or eliciting a response.

This allowed the inclusion of groups of questions, rhetorical questions, and the kind of statements Dillon (1983:30) describes as useful substitutes for questioning behaviour. (See Chapter 2 for an explanation of these.) For example in the Assertiveness discussion focussing on how members of the class deal with unwanted visitors, the teacher makes the following statement:

> *Tr: There are times in our life when we don't need those people.*

The statement receives a strong response from R.

> *That's it you know. This is what I was going on about the other week. If I've got paper now, like this, all over the place, I mean I don't want her to come in and see my work. ... It'd be two hours before I got her out the door. You know. So no way do I want her to come through the door.*
>
> *Well it's uncomfortable the first time you do it, (get rid of her) I mean you feel dreadful and after that, she knows then, ... you're not going to let her in.*

Following Dillon (1983) the above types of teacher statements were included as invitations to inquiry in initial coding procedures. I stayed with the broad definition of a question as outlined above. I resisted further tightening believing that tighter defining reduced the data to grammatical forms devoid of the social and inherent political context in which the questions were asked. Later tightening of the definition proved that this fear was unfounded.

Selecting categories: the first time

I began analysis with a set of questions developed by Nina Wallerstein (1983:22-23) as a means of developing 'problem-posing' activities in the classroom, within a critical literacy approach. This set of questions is discussed further in Chapter 2.

My emerging impressions of the teacher's questions in this classroom differed from the pattern Wallerstein suggested. My initial analysis was not intended to account for all questions. I used Wallerstein's categories because I was interested in the emancipatory possibilities of teachers' questions and as I was unaware of other categories underpinned by emancipatory educational purposes Wallerstein's categories provided a good start.

This analysis showed that some questions were not encompassed by the Wallerstein framework while other categories identified by Wallerstein were largely excluded from classroom talk. Clearly there was a need for a new set of categories which addressed the data in a more comprehensive way.

Selecting categories: the second time

I modified Wallerstein's framework adding two additional categories identified in Figure 5.

1 **How will the activity be done?**
Designed to initiate or continue class procedures and activities
2 **What is our common experience?**
Designed to highlight teacher experience and draw together student experiences at an individual level

Figure 5 Additions to Wallerstein's questions

This modification was driven by recurring questions geared towards completion of the task: classroom organization, turns at talk, orientation and reorientation to the written passage, and clarification of processes and meanings. Secondly many of the teacher's questions were advance organizers preparing the class verbally for the teacher's own experience of the topic.

> *Tr: Now before we go on what do you think of that? (1) I have definitely - this rings a bell with me ...*

Finally other questions drew attention to the commonality of group experience. These questions involved the consolidation of personal links either between the teacher and the students or between the students themselves; the latter tended to highlight students' common experiences. For example:

> How do we all respond to compliments?
> Do you all feel comfortable doing things that add to your life?
> Do you remember when you were young being told to be - just to be quiet and that sort of whole feeling?

Reflections on first and second sets of categories

While the second set of categories addressed some of the problems arising from my first coding procedure, other problems remained unresolved.

First, Wallerstein's initial framework was largely developed for NESB speakers and her first category focussed heavily on the exploration of words and their meanings in the context of the topic being addressed. In early codings I believed this to be an important category for examining a teacher's questions and the way they structure classroom processes, but this category seemed forced in a classroom of NESB and ESB women, who from Wallerstein's descriptions, appeared to have better control of the English language than her speakers.

While the topic of the written passage used to guide discussion could loosely equate with the source of 'codes' Wallerstein describes, the passage itself, the meanings generated and the procedures used to explore these meanings were not based on overall methodological procedures advocated by Wallerstein. In this class once the topics were identified, exploration of the topic was largely based on the aims and intentions of the teacher for the class. While these topics were clearly central to students' lives this exploration located knowledge production and reproduction within the framework of teacher intentions and questions, and the ideological assumptions of the written passage. The implications of these points are taken up in Chapter 6.

Additionally there was still the matter of what appeared to be a linear sequence of teacher questioning within the categories; something which I suspect was not crucial to the implementation of Wallerstein's framework but is implied in her work and supported by comparisons with Taba's cognitive task hierarchy used in the teaching of thinking (Wallerstein: 1983:18).

Clearly a new set of codes was required, but the restrictive influence of Wallerstein's categories had to be removed before I could generate categories which comprehensively addressed the insights this data revealed to me. I had been committed to taking a critical literacy perspective, which Wallerstein provided, and a similar framework did not readily present itself.

At this stage, some time after observations had been completed, I stopped using the categories from earlier analyses, although some were to re-emerge in the final framework. I began to select categories which spoke to me from the data rather than from established frameworks. Since the beginning of the project various types of questioning had been emerging. In journal entries I had noted questions which addressed 'relevance to student lives', 'exploration of knowledge', 'class procedures', 'negotiating processes', 'personal inquiry/ response from teacher' and 'responses to explore action on an issue'.

However, once formed these categories seemed to blur and overlap when I returned to the transcripts. The early categories did not address the range of questions being asked in this classroom. In addition they were defined too loosely to facilitate effective coding by peer debriefers.

Selecting categories: the final set

My final selection of categories was influenced by a number of considerations. First, I wanted a set of categories that accounted for all questions and made reliable distinctions between types of questions.

Secondly I wanted to see what proportion of classroom questions structured classroom procedures, exploration of knowledge and how knowledge was related to personal experience. I wanted categories to take account of the various ways in which the social world was constructed (Thomas:1983:486), through the range of questions the teacher asked in this classroom.

Thirdly Wallerstein's work stressed the importance of connecting individual experience with social conditions. I believed connections with individual experience was an important category to explore. Individual experience and student centred learning are given priority in many adult literacy methodologies while some writers have expressed concern about locating understandings solely within individual experiences (Coates:1988, Keddie:1980, Fueyo:1988).

In developing a set of categories I had wanted to reveal the types of questions that were not asked, thus naming what was both present and absent in the teacher's questioning practices. Like Erikson (cited in Anderson:1989:254) I believed in the evaluative nature of interpretive ethnographies when they

> *report absences ... "neutrally" as absences, rather than critically as the result of silencing.*

Unfortunately, the scope of this study did not allow for more precise development of the subcategories for a reliable identification of those absences which were, however, evident in preliminary analyses. The issue of absent questioning practices is taken up later in Chapters 6 and 7 when I discuss the data.

Member checking and peer debriefing

Throughout the procedures of analysis I asked the teacher involved to give her reactions to summaries of the categories and subcategories and to respond to the questioning framework.

I undertook 'peer debriefing' (Guba and Lincoln:1985) with a colleague who had recently undertaken research into children's questioning and helpseeking in language arts time (Comber:1990). I gave this colleague descriptions and examples of categories and subcategories and asked her to code the first fifteen pages of three transcripts accordingly. We met to review coding processes and clarify inconsistencies. This process supported the presence of the three major categories, however there was disagreement on sub-categories included in the descriptions.

Tightening definitions and categories

Member checks and peer debriefing enabled me to tighten descriptions of categories, making my implicit understandings of questioning more explicit for this research report. The checks identified the ambiguity of some sub-categories and forced me to address the loose definition of a question that guided the selection of data.

As a result of this peer feedback I made the following changes to questioning categories. I removed the sub-category distinctions between questions. Clearly definable subcategories could not be supported by my definitions although there were some discernible patterns and trends that were reliably identified and these will be discussed in Chapter 6. I changed my definition of a question, removing the kinds of statements Dillon (1983) identifies as useful substitutes. Peer feedback showed that there was little consistency in the coding of these statements as questions. I chose to remove them from data selected for analysis in this report.

Instead I used a syntactic definition of a question, which was either real or rhetorical, and may not necessarily elicit a response. I excluded from the final analysis the teacher statements Dillon (1983) proposes as effective substitutes for teacher questioning. I therefore present the teacher questions from this study under three major categories of questions and will address only these categories in my discussion in Chapter 6.

Figure 6. below outlines the categories used to explain the data selected for analysis in this study. Earlier subcategories within each category showed potential for revealing how much of the teacher's 'management' was based on transmission of knowledge and how much 'fostered inquiry' (Young:1990:Chapter 7:26). However, as mentioned previously, my final analysis addressed what I identified as three major purposes of classroom questioning: classroom organization, the knowledge produced and reproduced in classrooms and the relevance of that knowledge to students' lives. Within categories there is the potential to examine 'controlling' and 'fostering' functions, and this is discussed in Chapter 6.

Category A
questions structuring class procedures

Category B
questions structuring the exploration of knowledge

Category C
questions structuring the connections between knowledge explored and student experience

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Figure 6 Categories of a teacher's question

The above categories removed the inconsistencies and gaps between the data and the categories/subcategories I had initially used. While they do not embody new ideas in

teacher questioning practices they are unique in that they address the questioning practices of an adult literacy teacher in a more comprehensive way than Wallerstein's categories. The three categories identify different types of classroom activity that could readily be made problematic by the teacher.

Descriptions of these questioning categories and their frequency are presented in Chapter 4.

3.7 Data production: the patterns

3.7.1 The methods

The above sections describe the production of data relating to the context of classroom interaction and to the types of questions a teacher asks in one adult literacy classroom. As transcripts were examined two other aspects of the questioning became apparent. First some questioning patterns recurred on a regular basis, and second it was clear that the timing of questioning patterns varied. (See Chapter 2 for a discussion of patterns of classroom talk.) The data used to select and examine patterns of questions was produced from transcripts previously described in section 3.6. I narrowed the data base for pattern analysis to two transcripts, believing these transcripts to provide a representative view of the variety of patterns emerging over the discussion periods under study. My intention was to provide an overview of some patterns arising in adult literacy discussions and of the impact on literacy development of such patterns. My analysis is not meant to imply that these patterns will always occur, that these are the only patterns which will occur, or that these patterns can be generalized to other adult literacy classes.

3.7.2 Analysing and organizing data: the patterns

Establishing patterns of questions was not a separate procedure. As I examined the transcripts for teacher questions, other impressions emerged. I became aware of how often the teacher spoke, the period between a teacher question and continuation of teacher talk, the length of time spoken and the limited nature of student responses.

Patterns of classroom talk analysed in this study were initially identified by locating all instances of classroom talk which began with an 'invitation to inquiry', that is a teacher's question as identified in section 3.6. However not all invitations received a response, so further criteria for identifying patterns were required.
A pattern of classroom interaction was selected for further analysis if it contained the following elements as identified by Young (1987):

1 an invitation to inquiry (I)
2 student(s) response(s) (R)
3 teacher feedback to the response (F)

This sequence was used because of the restrictive influence it has on classroom interaction (Young: 1987, Dillon: 1983, Perrot: 1988). Many teacher's questions were eliminated from the pattern analysis because they did not begin an interaction cycle

which included the above three elements. Where a teacher question was followed by a student response and teacher feedback I allocated each part of the pattern a label according to the above three sections and identified a range of classroom interaction patterns.

As part of the peer checking mentioned in section 3.6 I asked a colleague to also identify questioning patterns with the above elements. My colleague highlighted the complexity and variety of patterns present, in addition to Young's (1987) regulated IRF pattern.

Bearing in mind that Young (1987:125) notes that 60% of classroom talk is made up of IRF patterns I chose three different sequences from the two discussion transcripts used to analyse patterns in this study. Each of these sequences begins with a teacher inquiry and ends with teacher feedback. At times the feedback merges with a new initiation to continue classroom interaction. Only one pattern mirrors the regulated IRF of Young's work. The sequences are presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 6.

3.8 Conclusions

This chapter has presented the theoretical and conceptual issues which shaped the methodology of the study. The distinction is significant because it identifies the ways in which theory was used to account for social interaction in the classroom using critical theory as a base. Additionally it identifies principles which influenced the way I conceptualized the multiplicity of related issues. I operated within an idealized framework which was not predetermined but was underpinned by a set of principles outlined in section 3.3 and further discussed in Chapter 5.

To accommodate these principles ethnographic methods were deliberately used to develop a picture of the complexity of issues influencing the teacher's choices about adult literacy practice. I was explicit about my role as a critical researcher who 'produced' data rather than collecting it in an objective disinterested fashion. I chose particular data to form the foundation of the study and my emerging impressions were shaped by two things: first the types of teacher questions missing from data in addition to those questions which were asked, and second the contradictions within the data highlighted by researcher analysis and teacher beliefs.

Such value laden research is open to challenge however, so the report of this study has described data production methods, selection and analysis in detail. These records show preliminary analyses and final categories chosen to analyse the data and include the beliefs which drove development of the final categories.

The study attempted to promote change in educational practice by examining one teacher's interaction in a class. Questioning was chosen as a pragmatic way of examining classroom interaction and patterns revealed were considered in the overall

context of the pressures operating on the teacher and the staff development needs she identified.

Within the field of critical social science research some critical approaches to educational research have been accused of being removed from the 'lived realities' of participants' lives (Lather:1986a, Ellsworth:1989) and may have limited explanatory power for teachers and teacher educators. Fay (in Lather:1988) also observes that

> *not only must a particular theory be offered as the reason why people should change their selfunderstandings but this must be done in an environment in which these people can reject this reason.*

To forestall these problems I incorporated correctives to my analysis. Interviewing methods enabled teacher and student voices to reveal the ways in which they interpreted classroom interaction, the teacher was involved in corroborating data produced and she informed my analyses of that data through her member checks and critiques of categories developed.

In this study I deliberately set out to connect the individual experiences of the women involved to the broader social conditions which influence those experiences. This included the teacher's individual experiences as a literacy educator and her participation in the increasing professionalism of adult literacy educators. It also included the women students, whose personal life experiences were revealed through discussion of social issues. The connections between 'private troubles' and 'public issues' (Mills:1959) is a central tenet of critical analyses of social interaction however it also presents difficulties. In reformulating individual experience as part of the social conditions which shape that experience the voices of individuals may be marginalized. The report has been written to include students' and teacher's interpretations. The main focus of this report however, is my analysis of questions using a critical perspective and to what extent I have also been concerned to illuminate the external structural constraints influencing the teacher's questioning in this classroom.

A limitation of the study is that it deals with only one teacher in one classroom for a period of ten weeks and uses 5 discussion periods as the basis for analysis of classroom interaction.

However, the study intended to reveal patterns of questioning, and absences within those patterns, which would assist teachers and teacher educators to understand more about the qualitative nature of classroom interaction and what influences that interaction. From a qualitative perspective a strength of the research is its examination of questioning patterns and of what a teacher does not do as much as what she does do in her classroom.

Endnotes

1 See Chapter 2 for mention of this polarizing practice in relation to the 'il/literate'.

Chapter 4: The Data

This study entailed analysing the questions a teacher asked in her adult literacy classroom. However, teacher questions are not asked in isolation. The critical perspective informing this study required that constraints on teacher questioning be incorporated in my analyses of classroom interaction. In this way individual behaviour is set within a broader framework which illuminates why the teacher acted in the way she did and provides insights into necessary requirements for staff development programs seeking to establish a viable pedagogy of adult literacy.

This chapter outlines data produced (Simon and Dippo:1986:200) in this study to support the contention that in this classroom interaction is asymmetric, it explores knowledge in a selective fashion and relates that knowledge to particular individual student experiences.

The data is offered in a variety of quantitative and qualitative forms to portray first, the relevant aspects of the context of the teaching setting, namely teaching aims and tensions, session organization and staff development experiences and reflections, second the questions asked, their categories and frequencies and third, the patterns of questioning, their context, the sequences of classroom discussion containing the patterns and teacher reflections on the discussions.

Contextual detail is presented as descriptive summations, incorporating raw data. These summaries identify

1 teaching aims and tensions because they help to understand the questions asked
2 the teacher's institutional constraints because these were identified as influencing teaching preparation and session organization
3 staff development experiences and reflections because this allows us to understand present conditions and why they exist, and what the necessary requirements for future dialogic practice might be.

4.1 The context

The data relates to three aspects of teaching in this study.

1 Teaching aims and tensions
2 Teaching session organization: phases in the class period and specific characteristics of each
3 Staff development experiences and reflections.

As the study unfolded the teacher articulated beliefs about adult literacy teaching and learning which shaped the way she planned and implemented her program. She organized her sessions in a very deliberate way to take account of student needs and

accommodate her own beliefs about what adult literacy classes should provide. This study focuses on one of three distinct parts of the teaching session: the second phase, which was the discussion period.

The study aimed to locate teaching practice within the wider context of staff development practices. The data, from teacher interviews, highlighted the links between previous staff development experiences, professional expectations made of the teacher in this study and her subsequent classroom practice.

What follows is a summary of the above three aspects of the teacher's professional setting. Background detail of these summations can be found in Appendix A. In Chapter 3, section 3.5.1, I outline the methods used to produce and corroborate the summaries and raw data presented here.

4.1.1 Teaching aims and tensions

The teacher in this study has developed a series of beliefs about literacy development which shape her teaching aims and classroom intentions. For this class she believes it is the teacher's responsibility to:

1 meet the broad educational and leadership expectations students have of her as the teacher in the class
2 meet specific literacy needs as stated by students in initial and ongoing academic counselling
3 anticipate each student's future literacy needs and cater for those needs in class activities
4 provide literacy activities which result in a written outcome, as this teacher believes writing is the essence of literacy development
5 ensure that literacy activities are 'active' and 'integrated', that is that they encompass oral competency, the interpersonal understandings and abilities required to use the literacy skills acquired, and that all of this development is purposeful, in that it is related to the student's life and has some application for her
6 maintain an interpersonal and group climate which is comfortable, secure and enjoyable so that students will feel involved and want to keep attending.
(See Appendix A section 9 for detail)

The class comprises a socio-economic, academic and culturally mixed group, however they all defer to the teacher's position of authority in the class. Within this context the teacher is the driving force behind classroom activities and she tries to meet specific student needs, her own beliefs about current and anticipated student needs and the role expectations the students have of her as an educational authority. The teacher's task is to resolve tensions emerging from the above needs and the classroom situation through her actual teaching practice. In addition these tensions must be resolved within the constraints of a 10 week course as students may not return for further classes, and within class sessions which are under constant time constraints. The tensions the teacher faces are outlined below and relate to the learning

environment of the classroom, the needs of the group and individuals within the group, the particular type of literacy outcomes and the extent to which social issues are explored during the discussion period.

Learning environment

On the one hand the teacher aims to provide an environment which will encourage students to take risks with their learning. Her approach must overcome the potential threat educational institutions pose for students with limited experience of educational success. Her task is also to introduce challenges to existing levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes so that students will become more confident to take the risks which will reveal new learning directions.

Individual and group needs

The teacher aims to address the individual needs expressed by each student as they relate to their personal, socio-cultural and economic position. She must embed these within social and educational experiences that she anticipates will encourage them to use their developing literacy abilities. This requires her to balance the needs of students as stated when first enrolling in the program, against the interpersonal needs of the group, as members work together in completing a task she has chosen for them.

Particular types of literacy outcomes

The teacher aims to achieve particular types of outcomes by balancing the development of conventional literacy skills, often identified by many students and literacy texts as measurable, tangible and associated with written outcomes (eg spelling, vocab and writing for specific purposes), with the development of less tangible literacy skills which underpin all written tasks (eg listening to others, voicing opinions, identifying assumptions, and accumulating a knowledge base which is contextually sensitive).

Depth of development

The teacher also aims to provide focused activities which are task oriented and aimed at completion, thus resulting in a degree of satisfaction and achievement for both teacher and students. Activities which encourage open ended exploration of issues, tend to have less closure.

The teacher's organization of the teaching session and phases within the session attempted to address the above tensions which emerge as a result of teaching aims, student expectations and time constraints on the class. The next section describes the way in which the teacher in this study addresses teaching session organization.

4.1.2 Teaching session organization

The class is organized into three distinct phases: phase one, individual folder work; phase two, the discussion period; phase three, revisiting of earlier folder work. Aspects of interaction in the first and third phases will only be referred to here if they impact

on the discussion period. The discussion period is described in detail with specific reference to the teacher's expectations guiding this part of the class and to the use of the written passage which is always the focus of the discussion period.

Phase one: individual folder work

The first phase of the class, generally 70-80 minutes, involved students in work set by the teacher and found in folders. This work addresses student needs as they define them as well as activities determined by the teacher. She checks and corrects previous individual work alongside the student, and also uses this phase to identify emerging needs, and literacy activities which will address those needs. This is done by discussing previous work with the student and relating needs to possible literacy activities the students might undertake in class.

Phase two: discussion period

The discussion period, of 40 to 50 minutes is the second phase of the class. All students participate in a discussion chaired by the teacher. It is guided by a written passage, which she usually chooses. For examples of passages see Appendix B. The discussion aims to address social aspects of literacy use, that is how students will use the knowledge and literacy skills they gain in the class. It aims to take students beyond the specific skills they identify in initial interviews. As the teacher says

> *I feel really conscious that (reading and writing) is not everything that needs to be improved in this class. What has been coming out since you have been here is a lot of stuff about how inadequate they feel about themselves, lack of self-image, lack of support from their family. ... I've been trying to do confidence building in that class too, but that comes along with this stuff about "enhancing people's capacity to think, create and question" (From the ACAL definition)*
>
> *I always think they should be enjoying themselves ... doing some reading and some talking and understanding the vocab, but it is also to be having a good time so that the group works.*

A set of teacher expectations guide the discussion period. These are regularly affirmed and supported by teacher directed turn taking strategies which keep the discussion oriented to her teaching aims for the discussion period. The expectations include:

1 all participants should have a turn to speak
2 all speakers' opinions are valued
3 when opinions become disparate the class 'agrees to disagree' rather than tease out differences
4 the discussion will be linked to an activity (usually written) to be taken up in phase three of the session or later at home
5 the discussion period should be an enjoyable experience.
(See Appendix A, section 9 for some direct quotes.)

While the exact structure of this phase varies in length and focus there are common elements:

1 The room is always arranged in a large square with desks and chairs positioned so students can face each other.
2 Discussion takes place after a short break and generally students drink coffee and have some cake or biscuits.
3 The teacher generally chooses the topic although this is influenced by one to one discussion during phase one of the session Students are encouraged to offer topics for discussion.
4 The discussion is always guided by a written passage.
5 The group discussion assists completion of an individual literacy activity which always includes further writing associated with the topic under discussion and is completed by the students in their own time.
6 A complete reading of the passage must be undertaken during thediscussion period, to apply the key issues relevant to the associated literacy task.

In addition, within the discussion period the written passage has an effect on the discussion. It:

1 focuses the discussion
2. assists teacher control of the discussion to achieve a complete reading of the written passage and examination of the accompanying tasks
3 provides concrete reading tasks and writing tasks via the activity set by the teacher to address the specific needs students have identified in choosing to attend classes
4 supplies information which may not have been readily available to students previously
5 enables the teacher to draw attention to aspects of the written passage or the topic which she believes are worthy of examination.

(The above points were confirmed by the teacher and are supported by raw data in Appendix A, section 9.)

Phase three: revisiting folders

The third phase of the class usually takes about thirty minutes although lengthy discussion periods sometimes mean the third part of the lesson is collapsed. It is a consolidating period enabling spelling checks, computer work and clarification of the task associated with the discussion period. Students work on their own projects and there is limited student-student interaction.

4.1.3 Staff development experiences and reflections

Data on staff development is divided into two sections: first, a description of the existing College adult literacy staff and staff development practices and second, the teacher's reflections on experiences of staff development.

Staff and staff development

At the time of the study, funding for the literacy program was under review and staff were aware that there would be major cuts the following semester. During the observation period the adult literacy staff comprised a .5 permanent member of staff, who was the literacy teacher in this study, two .3 contract staff and three hourly paid instructors. During the second semester the .5 permanent position would be continued and four hourly paid staff would be employed.

State wide staff development was offered to staff at the College by the Adult Literacy Unit which was located in a DETAFE College in the city centre at the time of the study.

In the first half of 1990 this statewide staff development included workshops to "install" curriculum modules which had been developed by DETAFE curriculum staff. Attendance at these workshops was limited because of the availability of funds. The teacher involved in this study went to the workshop related to the Introduction to Vocational Education Course (IVE Course) (Her funding however was obtained from another college because of work she was undertaking there.) Two other members of staff from the College involved in this study also attended, one of them from the adult literacy program, the other from the section in the College offering the IVE Course.

The teacher in this study was responsible for the staff development of other adult literacy staff at the College. Staff are paid one hour to attend a two hour staff meeting once a term and occasionally money is available to pay part time instructors to attend other staff development activities. The purpose of the staff meeting is to talk

> *about different students and what materials they need ... we had a theme on autobiographies in the first term and then it went to biographies, we discussed how we would do that.*

A literacy staff development activity, as distinct from staff meetings was planned for Term 2. It was intended that the day be combined with adult literacy teachers in other DETAFE colleges nearby and that staff work together for the day to address their common concerns. During our interviews the teacher said she would like the day to focus on the following:

1 conference writing
2 goal setting
3 assessment, to develop a system of recording student progress now that classes would be using the English A and B materials
4 examples of group discussions which have gone well.

The above issues were not addressed however, because funding was unavailable for part time instructors for this day, and the day was cancelled.

The staff meeting (of approximately 2 hours) for that term was held in the ninth week of the study. As coordinator, the teacher had completed a written agenda with the following issues to be discussed:

1 Staff development meeting with another college
2 Coffee money
3 Coordinator's hours
3a Timetable/situation here (at this college)
4 IVE Course
5 How we organize teaching the new courses/Prep sheets?
5a Publicity drive - suggestions?
6 Notes on conferencing
7 All Aust. English (Resource sharing)
8 Vol. (volunteer) tutors

A Senior Lecturer from the College was available to discuss ways of recording assessment and student progress in the new courses. The meeting began with the teacher explaining the funding, staffing and class changes to the adult literacy program to be offered in Semester 2, 1990. (See Appendix A, Section 3, for further details of these changes.) The major change was to be the introduction of a new structured part time course which would take the place of existing adult literacy classes. The course had 'terminal objectives' and a 1-5 competency rating scale to identify a student's performance on each objective. During the staff meeting to introduce the course the teacher said

> *... the main thing for you now (is) to have a look at the terminal objectives (of the course) and work out how we're going to do this with a student who's coming here for two hours a week. And the other thing I wouldn't mind talking about while we're at it is how we're going to program (plan activities for students). We'll continue to do individual programing.*

During the meeting the staff acknowledged the limitations of the new courses for part time adult literacy students who often came with specific needs which were not always accommodated by general English courses. There was little discussion on how to overcome these limitations and no discussion on whether the courses should in fact be introduced. Most discussion related to the management of the new system of modules to be introduced in the next term.

A key issue was the management of progress reports for students doing the proposed new course, including clarification of a set of competency levels identified in the new course, and the procedures teachers would use to allocate each student a rating on the competency scale. Other concerns discussed included: how to maintain consistency between staff on the ratings; how many times staff would undertake an assessment of each student throughout the term; how staff would juggle the new administrative demands of resources required for students at different levels given the part time nature of their teaching commitments; the nature of recording procedures required to

maintain comprehensive assessment profiles in order to respond to the anticipated increase in requests for academic transcripts as a result of new government training ventures.

In a previous interview the teacher had acknowledged to me that she had decided to

1 offer a structured course to replace existing literacy classes which operated on meeting individual needs as stated by the students
2 adopt selective aspects of that course, the reading and writing components
3 adopt the specific competency rating scale reporting procedures used in the IVE Course within the adult literacy classes.

She described the above three decisions as pragmatic, saying it was not possible for her to teach in the new course in one part of the College, and provide staff development in another part of the College for adult literacy staff teaching a modified version of the course within the adult literacy program.

Organized staff development for adult literacy staff within the College during the one term period of the study consisted of the 2 hour meeting described above.

The teacher's reflections on staff development

The literacy staff development meeting described above for Term 2 (the period of the study) began as an idea initiated by the teacher in this study:

> *an inservice day for ptis (part time instructors) ... a real workshop ... I would like people to come along and actually say what they are doing in their classes and how they do their assessments...*

As previously mentioned the day was replaced by a two hour staff meeting which focused primarily on the management of the proposed new course.

The teacher in this study attended State co-ordinator meetings three times a year with co-ordinators from other colleges, however at the time of the study in 1990, she believed these weren't able to address staff development which improves classroom teaching.

> *The truth of the matter is with adult literacy, when you go off to meet other adult literacy people, you don't talk about what happens in the classroom, you talk about what you can do to save funds, or get more pti hours or how to cope really. ... Other people in (coordinator) jobs have said that there's never any time to talk about what we want to teach.*

Her overall impression is that staff development is limited by lack of funds and the contractual or part time nature of employment, which also limited time available for staff development. As the teacher says

> *You can't expect (staff) to come in their own time when they don't get paid much anyway.*

In addition staff development has a tendency to focus on the management of existing or introduced courses rather than examining the rationale for introducing those courses in the first place.

> *... it's everything (to do) with the management, how we are going to do it.*

She has no recollection of being taught in any systematic way how to teach adult literacy. Furthermore although she believes she is an 'expert literacy teacher' she also admits to struggling somewhat with the discussion classes.

> *I've never had any staff development on how to run a discussion. I mean I've worked out along the way ... we should have some rules.*

Throughout the study she made reference to the need for adult literacy staff to have greater access to information about classroom practice and believed this would improve the quality of teaching. She related her own staff development needs to classroom practice, saying

> *I would really like to look at what other people are doing ... in their classrooms. I'd particularly like to look at how they do their assessment, particularly ongoing assessment. ... how they manage their time, how they manage two to three hour classes. I wouldn't mind looking at resources.*

In response to a request from the Principal for staff development ideas she said

> *I would like to have more time to be able to go and talk with other teachers. I really long to have a professional discussion with other people ... about what actually happens in the classroom. It seems that if I'm not teaching or preparing a lesson I'm fighting for funds.*

In the teacher's reflections on staff development, time and funding constraints were recurring factors influencing the limited staff development she received.

4.2 The questions

There are two types of data in this section. The first presents the three categories of questions identified in Chapter three; the second presents the frequency of questions by category and transcript.

Three categories of teacher questions were identified in this study:

Category A: questions structuring class procedures
Category B: questions structuring exploration of knowledge
Category C: questions structuring the connections between knowledge explored and student experiences

4.2.1 Questions structuring class procedures

Category A questions relate to the teacher initiating, negotiating, continuing and completing the class activity. Such questions structure turns at talk, the next stage in

an activity, how activities will be adapted to suit class or individual needs, how activities will be continued, or discontinued. Questions such as those starred below also structure the clarification of student response where there is some confusion. Questions in this category do not negotiate meanings of words per se, (see category B for a description of these types of questions) rather they clarify the student's response, establishing what has been said so further discussion can take place.

Examples:

Everyone, everyone agreeing along the way here?
Got 18? (le page 18)
S will you read about compliments?
And did it? (seeks further elaboration of activity)
Who wants to read out loud?
And the rest of you?
And then what do you say?
What? (seeks clarification of word used) *
Do you understand that?
R have you found 'polis'? (R looking in dictionary)
Now G would you mind going on reading that?
Are they coming from Elizabeth? (seeks clarification) *
And what does she say?
Where are we up to?
And they're Housing Trust units are they? *
Well, going back to our multi-function polis - which is going to be at Port Adelaide isn't it?
Can I just go through this question?
OK anyone want to say anything else on the MFP?

4.2.2 Questions structuring the exploration of knowledge

Category B questions are about knowledge production and reproduction. They imply consensus with existing discussion or material presented in the written passage, or alternatively they contest that same information, issue or knowledge.

Examples:

So who knows what this stands for - Multi-function polis? Do you know what it is?
What do you think about this?
What does Gilman look like?
But what else was there that was once a horrible country area?
Why is Adelaide possibly going to get it now and not Queensland?
Which, which part is rich though?
Are you sure about this or is this just hearsay?

Do you agree with that?
If you put a lot of cheap housing together what happens? Is that a real world?
Is that a good idea?
So what do we reckon?
Now really, do you believe that?
And why not?
What about you P what do you think?
Maybe there's a reason why you're at the stage you are?

Many questions in this study are cloze exercises which require students to fill in blank spaces in the text with an appropriate word. These questions are coded as category B: questions about information, issues or events. Further discussion of the implications of cloze questions is taken up in Chapter six. Cloze questions, which are guided by the written passage are shown in the following sequence which appears early in the self-image transcript:

Tr: (Reading from written passage) Hence, Dr Maxwell Malzt, author of the bestseller "PsychoCybernetics" wrote, 'The goal of any psychotherapy is to change an individual's image of himself'. If you see yourself as being hopeless at mathematics, you will always have difficulty with --M?

M: Maths.

Tr: (Reading) Perhaps spared by some bad early experiences you will have developed an attitude that says 'No matter what, I can't do --?

M: Maths.

Tr: (Reading) Therefore you don't try. Generally, you will fall further and further ---

S: Back

4.2.3 Questions structuring connections between knowledge explored and student experience

Category C questions connect the issue or information being discussed with past and present experiences, and feelings the students have, and future actions the student might take related to the issue being discussed. The questions do not invite further exploration of the issue, rather they ask for examples of how individual students have experienced an issue, or what they might do faced with a similar situation in the future.

Examples:

What about you R are you taking some time for yourself?
And you feel OK about that?
Do you do these things for yourself G or do you feel guilty about it?
How do we all respond to compliments?
Would you say thank you?
Who has been to Gilman?

How would you feel if it was German people? (to a German student)
.. any of you here in the 50s when Elizabeth was being built?
Anyone here go out to do their business at Elizabeth, or ever had to?
How do you feel?
Do you like it?
How long has your husband lived here?

4.2.4 Frequency of questions asked

Figure 7. summarizes teacher questions across five transcripts. Transcripts are numbered 1 to 5, and identified in figure 4, section 3.6.1.

	Transcript				
Data	1	2	3	4	5
category A	15	29	16	32	35
category B (total)	17	23	16	13	40
category B (cloze)	-	10	-	-	-
category C	18	22	19	19	18
total tr questions +	50	74	51	64	93
total tr talk *	58	102	85	89	140
total Ss questions	6	5	10	13	10
restricted questions #	16	27	10	25	27

Figure 7 Summary of teacher's questions.

+ These are the number of questions the teacher asks. There are often several questions embedded in one instance of teacher talk, while some instances of teacher talk have no questions.

* Total teacher talk is reckoned by the number of times the teacher appears as a speaker in the transcript. This includes single words, reading of sections from the written passage which guides the discussion, and interruptions to student talk.

Restricted questions are questions which provide limited opportunity for student response. Following Dillon (1983:38) restricted questions are identified by a silence of 3 seconds or less between the teacher's question and continuation of teacher talk.

4.3 Questioning patterns

For this study three sequences of classroom interaction were selected for analysis. I chose these patterns because each includes examples of question types and patterns discussed later in Chapter six. They also provide examples of how teacher questions constrain classroom discussion. There are many other examples in the transcripts but the scope of this thesis limits discussion to those selected here.

Sequences to be discussed in Chapter six are from the Self Image and Assertiveness discussions. The teacher's purpose for each discussion is outlined along with the context of the sequence within the discussion and later reflections the teacher had on the discussion in question. Notation to the left of the transcript refers to the part of the IRF cycle identified, and is consistent with notation indicated in Chapter 3, that is:

teacher initiation (I)
student response (R)
teacher feedback (F)
response by the teacher (Rt)

4.3.1 The self image sequence

The context

The following discussion took place in week 4 of my observations and was a part of a discussion on self image. The teacher had photocopied a written passage and she began the lesson by explaining the research recording procedure to a new student who was joining the class for the first time that day. She then proceeded to read the first section of the article. (See Appendix B for a copy of the written passage.)

In selecting the topic for this discussion the teacher wanted to

> *reach the people there that do feel pretty under-confident. ... I know that so many of them give themselves negative messages. I wanted them to start thinking about how they could praise themselves up a bit more and to a certain extent (the session) touched on that.*

The topic followed directly from conversations the teacher had with a number of students about the confidence they had in their ability to learn. This was a new direction in topics for class discussions. Usually the topics addressed 'general knowledge and current affairs'.

The sequences used here occurred near the beginning of the discussion period. Sequence A explores the 'hopeless' feelings students have about their abilities.

Sequence A

I Tr: What are you hopeless at?

R S: I would say remembering things. My husband knows if I think something is right and I go forward and say it and then I say "Oh, why didn't I think first'. Little things like that. I'm not really in control, and that's (why) I call myself hopeless.

F Tr: Right, you feel, you jump in without thinking, which you are likely to do sometimes. Yes, well, that happens all the time.

I Anyone else got little messages in their head that they're not good at something and they keep on doing it? (3 seconds). No, well we'll go on with that.

Rt I think shyness is one thing.

R ?: Some people would say confidence - lack of confidence

F Tr: Yes, confidence. A lot of people have that feeling. Yeah, I'm not too good -
R L: Communicate
I Tr: What?
R L: Communicate
F Tr: You feel a bit awkward about communicating. Yes, therefore if you (keep) on thinking that, that's probably the way you're going to be. Shyness comes along with that lack of confidence, that some people take that role on. 'I'm shy, you know, I'm really no good at communicating.' Because they think that way, that's the way they are. Let's go on. I don't feel like keeping on reading, let's go on to compliments.
I S, will you read about compliments?

This is an example of consecutive IRF cycles - there are three here, with an extra student response that the teacher clarifies.

The following sequence occurred later in the Self Image discussion after the women have discussed further the idea of self-image. They read from the written passage about 'healthy self-love' and the advantages gained by feeling comfortable about doing things for one's own benefit.

Sequence B

I Tr: I'll put a question to you. Do you feel comfortable doing things that add to your life?
R J: Yes, all of a sudden, I say 'I'm going to do that' and I go and do it.
I Tr: And you feel okay about that?
R L: Sometimes.
R ?: Not very often.
I Tr: Are you working on it? M do you ever take some time for yourself?
R M: Not often.
I Tr: And why not? Come on, you three (to M, P, and R) why not?
R M: With me it's been to do with X. ... he hates to see people spend money. So I think, 'Oh I'd like that.' And then I think, 'I can't do that I can't spend money on myself.'
I Tr: What about you, P?
R P: Well I've been ... making myself do things like today. ... (Coming to the class) I have to force myself. I have to really force myself before I (come).
F Tr: (interrupts) Force yourself to do things for you. Alright, we'll keep working on it.
R P: And it makes it harder when you get there because then you're not relaxed - things just don't come naturally.
F Tr: It will come naturally coming to this class. (Everybody talking)
R P: Until you get used to your surroundings and you settle in.
R S: I think we all come used to that life.
Tr: Maybe we'll ask G, everyone has a turn.
I Do you do these things for yourself G or do you feel guilty about it?

This sequence shows a long series where the teacher and students alternate with the teacher initiating and the students responding 5 times before the teacher gives specific feedback. It is probable that students regard a new teacher initiation as an implied approval of the previous response.

Teacher reflections on the discussion

The teacher in this study believed the 'social skills' required to use literacy in different contexts were central to literacy development. Her approach to literacy teaching deliberately incorporated a discussion period, however the inclusion of discussion and the choice of topics were by no means straightforward decisions. During the week before the Self Image discussion, the teacher was not certain that 'self image' was an appropriate topic for an adult literacy class. In an interview after the lesson she described her doubts during preparation for the session.

> *I was thinking, well, they are coming for literacy classes and their main purpose in coming is ... to read and write. So maybe I shouldn't be getting into those finer details about how to feel better about yourself. Maybe they need to be reading.*

She had been talking to some colleagues about the class discussions and while she said she believed firmly in the idea of group discussions she had also

> *started to think about the self-esteem (Self Image topic), I thought ... they haven't come along for self-esteem lessons, have they, they've come along for how-to-read-better lessons. I got confused in my thoughts then.*

We talked about how the class had dealt with the Self Image passage and there were clearly questions the teacher was asking herself about the way she had developed the discussion.

> *Maybe a shorter passage with set questions would work better.*

And in a later interview

> *Maybe it really needed to be a bit more structured. Maybe I should have said write down all the areas you feel good about and now lets think about how you got that way.*

Her reflections on the lesson were not only at the instigation of questions raised in interviews. She noted that not all literacy teachers believed discussion was a useful part of literacy development and in talking to such teachers she began to doubt the validity of including discussion in her session planning.

4.3.2 The Assertiveness sequence

The context

The Assertiveness discussion took place in the week following the Self Image discussion and occurred in week 5 of my observations. The teacher explains her intentions for the lesson (provided in a discussion afterwards).

> *I truly wanted (the students) to understand what assertive behaviour was and wanted them to feel they have some rights in making decisions. Several of them know that they are not clear in stating what they want in life and they feel they are not getting what they ... want. I wanted to give them some skills that they could go away and use and then come back and talk about it. ... I thought this article might let us deal with all of it.*

The sequence begins with the teacher shifting closer to the blackboard where she has written 'The case of the nine chicken nuggets'. She relates a story about some chicken nuggets she bought from the shop and tells of the way she went back to the shopkeeper to let them know there were only nine, not ten nuggets as advertised on the pack. The teacher then reads to point one of the written passage used to guide discussion. See Appendix B for a copy of the passage.

Sequence C

I	Tr: Do you remember when you were young being told just to be quiet and that sort of whole feeling?
R	R: All the time.
F	Tr: Yes, all the time. (interruptions by students, not asked as individuals)
R	R: Children should be seen and not heard.
F	Tr: Right there you are.
R	D: Nothing to do with you.
F	Tr: That's right. Yes, that's right.
R	D: I'm still being told that.
R	R: No one asked for your opinion.
F	Tr: Yes, that's right, all of that.
R	D: If we want your opinion we'll ask for it.
F	Tr: Oh, beautiful, exactly so maybe it's hard when you always have that.
R	L: Listen to your elders, you know like.
R	G: Respect your elders.
R	L: Yeah like be quiet and you know what I mean.
F	Tr: Huh mm mm mm
Rt	I do that at all the time.
R	G: ''Don't be cheeky girls'' is at our house - (inaudible)
F	Tr: Alright ... R you were reading you could read some more ...

This sequence is an example of alternating student response being followed by teacher feedback. Where the feedback is taken for encouragement for more student response.

There are seven R-Fs between teacher initiations. In discussion after the topic the teacher said

> *I think if I had more time I would like the students to have done some writing and consideration of the topic before the actual discussion comes up.*

She believed the quality of discussion was definitely better if set questions guided the classroom discussion.

4.4 Summary

There are three sequences of classroom talk presented here. Within each sequence IRF cycles such as those described by Young (1987) are present. In addition other patterns of the elements of the IRF cycle are also presented. Because of the limited scope of the study I have not attempted to identify or generalize all cycles present. The sequences presented here demonstrate ways in which the teacher intentionally and unintentionally controls classroom discussion. The impact on classroom interaction will be discussed further in Chapter six.

Chapter 5: Reflections on method

5.1 Introduction

Critical social science research is underpinned by the notion of reflexivity which encompasses more than merely considering research actions. Throughout this study I wanted to recognize the way knowledge is often produced as a result of research and acknowledge how the process of producing knowledge affects the lives of those involved in the research process. I wanted to incorporate my recognition as part of my design and methods. Reflection, and action on that reflection, were important elements in my approach to the study. In this chapter I identify and reflect on three methodological issues which emerged during the study. They were

1 the practice of reflexivity
2 the restrictions imposed by my constrained understandings
3 the ethical considerations which conflicted with methodological implementation.

5.2 The practice of reflexivity

Patti Lather (1988:575-6) argues for critique and reflexivity to inform the research process. A 'spirit of critique' (Kenway:1987:4) underpinned this study and the central elements of such an approach are outlined in Chapter three. They include the contention that unequal relations of power are embedded in social relations, that knowledge is socially constructed and as such can perpetuate or subvert those relations and that power is a two-way process which if it is to be comprehensively understood must be analysed in terms of how individuals perpetuate as well as subvert processes of domination and subordination. Clearly critique and reflexivity are not separate processes as is indicated by the following discussion of reflexivity. Lather (1986:267) acknowledges that operationalizing reflexivity is a 'journey into uncharted territory'. Throughout this study I used her guidelines to develop a 'reflexive' and 'reciprocal' relationship between the researcher, the teacher and the data produced. There were five means by which I addressed reflexivity. They included:

1 incorporating researcher correctives
2 questioning social arrangements
3 making explicit emerging contradictions
4 inviting different interpretations
5 addressing the application of findings.

Below I explain how I addressed each of the above and briefly review the problems in achieving each.

1 While the research question was clearly framed to accommodate my own needs and interests as a researcher the research design explicitly included 'corrective(s) to the investigator's preconceptions regarding the subject's life-world and

experiences' (Comstock in Lather 1986:268). The use of member checks, critical friends, recycling of interview questions and a lengthy time for analysis all enabled the data to be reviewed from a number of perspectives and at different points in time during the study. However, time was continually a problem which prevented the amount of checking that I had originally intended. Because it took so much time to get transcripts into a readable form for others, I decided to condense much of the raw data from interviews and observations into summaries. Therefore the teacher only saw my summaries of her accounts, and selected raw data from extracted quotes.

2 I challenged the 'naturalness' of social arrangements in the classroom because I believed that teaching practices are supported by ideological positions not always made explicit in discussion of practice. I asked questions about the various phases of session organization, the arrangement of the class, and the reasons for choosing some literacy activities over others. Some of these arrangements were publicly acknowledged aspects of 'good' literacy practice, such as the use of individual folders for work related to literacy development specifically identified by the student. Other arrangements related to specific questioning strategies deemed to develop effective classroom interaction, for example, turn taking and the use of a text to focus classroom discussion. I was able to challenge and explore these arrangements because of the teacher's willingness to participate in what she believed was a process which would improve her teaching. The challenges extended to my own practice and my interpretations of the data produced. I expand on this in section 5.3 and 5.4 where I outline changes to my own impressions of the data and the appropriateness of methods used during the study.

3 I sought to be explicit with the teacher about the contradictions I saw emerging in the data, and in the researcher and teacher actions throughout the study. This included referring back to teacher statements which may have established contradictory beliefs about literacy practice. In later interviews with the teacher I presented what I believed were contradictions in my own practice as a researcher.

4 I showed the teacher written accounts summarizing classroom interaction and acknowledged the biases which guided these analyses. I met with the teacher a number of times to ask her response to my summaries because I wanted her insights to contribute to my analysis. Accounts were always presented for response in the context of her teaching intentions for the class, the external factors impinging on the class (eg the funding crisis), and her experiences of staff development. I believed these accounts were offered in an environment which would encourage the teacher to contest my accounts. While this did happen, other colleagues mentioned the discomfort the teacher felt as she talked about the research with them. To assist the teacher to express different accounts of the data the research design could have formally included a 'critical advocate' for the

teacher; someone with whom she could have shared her account of the findings, and then taken up those accounts with me. I think this would have broken down the implied correctness of my accounts by virtue of my 'researcher' status.

5 In beginning the study, it was my intention that I would present emerging findings to the teacher so she would be able to use them as the basis of further exploration of her practice. Insights were not immediately converted into practical strategies because of time constraints, my selective sharing of data, and the teacher's decision to not take up some suggestions she believed were not appropriate to her classroom setting. However insights from the study have been related by the teacher to other classes she takes. She said in an interview to review analysis of data

> *I'm thinking about changes now (8 months after the study). In the women's studies classes (where she now teaches) there's lots of discussion. They're three hour sessions with not a lot of writing so now I think I ought to apply the (findings of the research).*

In addition the written report of this study enables the teacher to further examine her practice. It sets the changes she might make in the broader context of her staff development needs and outlines necessary support required for her to take appropriate future action to transform her classroom practice (Smith:1990). The first four of the above procedures based on Lather's (1986) guidelines for reflexivity helped to limit, or at least make more explicit, the ways in which I might have imposed my own understandings on the data and so reduce the ways in which the teacher might account for and act on the findings. However, using 'member checks' and critical friends did not guarantee a close fit between theory and practice. As Acker (in Lather:1986:576) notes

> *an emancipatory intent is no guarantee of an emancipatory outcome.*

While my 'idealized framework' (Troyna & Foster:1988) of research, that is 'openly ideological' (Lather:1986), collaborative and ethical was useful as a point of reference it was of necessity only a framework; the research process evolved in response to the changing conditions in and away from the site and was often less than 'ideal'. The above research ideals were constantly thwarted by the funding crisis and the constraints of domestic and professional commitments we both had to maintain. The funding crisis added considerably to the demands on the teacher's time. This meant that time to meet and explore classroom practices before the class was limited. The teacher's teaching and administration duties often meant interviews after the class had to be cut short. This limited the time to explore actual practice and the implications for applying findings within the relatively short field period. In addition my limited experience at research, and particularly critical research, meant I was unaware of the ways I could have increased the collaborative aspects as noted above.

5.3 Restrictions imposed by my constrained understandings

The following section outlines experiences in this study which help to highlight the problems in doing ethnographic research using a critical sociological approach. Most experiences are related to the dilemmas facing researchers who begin with a particular view of the social interaction in the classroom knowing full well that if participants are to have a voice in the research process the research method must accommodate the lived realities of classroom life. Thus choices concerning actual research practice are often less than ideal. What follows is a description of two experiences which emerged as a result of my predisposition to view classroom interaction through a particular critical lens.

5.3.1 Questions as the focus of how power is structured

As the observation period progressed I became increasingly interested in the factors which influenced the questions the teacher posed in the classroom and the various forms of literacy able to be developed from classroom discussion. I was aware that discussion seemed to skim the surface of issues, but because transcripts were slow in being typed and checked, I was uneasy about forming impressions without evidence, that is, a transcript of the classroom discussion.

In addition, my emerging accounts of classroom interaction were influenced by the **absence** of certain teacher's questions rather than those which were asked. The original focus of the study, How a teacher's questions structure classroom interaction implicitly and explicitly? diminished as it became clear to me that ways of structuring interaction could not be defined as easily as I might initially have believed through the use of teacher questions and additionally these questions did not provide the teacher with absolute control over the discussion.

I had an unerring belief that the teacher did structure classroom processes: she decided what was to be done, and how, and as a result of talking to students and listening to their concerns she could rationalize why her program evolved in the way it did. But her control was not absolute in this class. In stepping back from a specific focus on the teacher's questions I began to see more clearly the dilemmas confronting a teacher in the organization of a literacy class. I also heard the clear expectations of students with regard to those organizing practices.

Stepping back was not simple; at times I was aware of the way in which my understanding of critical pedagogy blinded me to other ways of "seeing" and "hearing" classroom interaction. After a meeting with very critical friends in the sixth week of the study I suspended as much as possible my focus on how participation and negotiation were structured in the classroom and how questions fitted into the framework developed by Nina Wallerstein (1983). I began to observe the class in less of a preconceived way and heard the teacher talk about the choices she faced in preparing and implementing her plans for the class. More than once I heard her express uncertainty about her teaching practice, what was happening in the class, and about the discomforting process of being involved in this study.

5.3.2 Types of questions the teacher asked

Second, I came to understand the multiplicity of ways in which questions were asked and not asked in the classroom - this was enhanced by reading the literature on classroom questioning emanating from school research. In designing the study I was concerned to locate it within the research on adult education hence my attention to Wallerstein's framework. In retrospect a more complete understanding of the ways in which teachers ask questions in classrooms would have informed my understanding of the pragmatic issues faced by teachers as they attempt to address the various purposes of the class. I believe the early stages of fieldwork were constrained by my attention to Wallerstein's framework and my limited attention to the intentions and effects of asking questions in a classroom.

Lather (1986) believes this is a limitation of 'openly ideological' research which must be overtly acknowledged. She contends

> *(d)ata must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured* (p267).

In early analyses I tried to 'pour the data' into Wallerstein's framework with two results. One, I limited my understanding of power relations in the classroom to questioning practices and two, in initial analyses I failed to acknowledge the quantity of questions about class procedures. I was aware however, of the impact such questions had on the direction of the discussion. Focusing on questioning as a determinant of power relations in the classroom resulted from my need to contain the research within the limits of the award for which I was enrolled. However to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the social interaction in the classroom it was necessary to stop limiting my focus to the questions asked by the teacher.

In attending to the dilemmas faced by the teacher and to the clear expectations raised by many of the students I was able to shift my focus away from **absences**, that is, what was not happening in the class. I began to ask what was happening in the classroom as it related to questions and power relations. Most important I came to see how students' lives and felt needs were understood and woven into the classroom interaction. My previous reflections and analyses had focused on what I thought their needs were and should be. I began to see that the changes brought about by participation in literacy classes were significant to the women in this study and that my discussion of classroom interaction must include their understandings if it were to move beyond a distanced academic perspective. I am aware though that student perspectives in particular, are a small part of the final report.

The above two experiences relate to the early expectations I had of doing critical ethnography and the way in which the research process evolved. They point to the need for flexible and reflective approaches to research which acknowledge changing researcher perspectives and allow emerging analyses to accommodate the changing understandings of the data produced.

5.4 Ethical considerations which conflicted with methodological values

Further research dilemmas arose as a result of the contradictions between ethical issues associated with what I believed to be my responsibility to participants, and the values I attached to research methods I chose to adopt. I began the study intending to view the teacher and students as participants in the process rather than as objects of study, or suppliers of information. (They did serve the latter function, however they also influenced my understanding of the information they gave.) I set out to share emerging understandings and offer analyses as the study unfolded. Below I describe two instances where researcher responsibility to participants was not met during the research process.

5.4.1 Sharing insights with the teacher

During the series of interviews with the teacher I found it difficult to share fully my views on classroom interaction. I realized that to a certain extent I had internalized traditional ideas of the interview as a oneway process which elicits data from the informant. I offered opinions on some issues, particularly those less central to the research focus, however I was concerned that my evolving insights about the nature of the teacher's questioning practices would change the teacher's practice in such a way that the research would be rendered invalid. While I was aware that this contradicted the basic tenets of the paradigm I had chosen to work within, and the research intentions I had indicated at the beginning of the study, I was conscious of the pervasive power of empiricist claims to validate research via notions of 'uncontaminated' data. In future research I would make more of Lather's (1986b) notion of 'catalytic validity' as the basis for exploring such changes in the research process, which are actually at the heart of critical ethnography. Ethnographic methods are able to provide data on changes to participant and researcher understandings as the study progresses and thus reveal the ways in which research intentionally affects lives (Lather:1991).

The teacher was aware of the contradictory elements of my stated and actual research practice. In the eighth week of the project she said

> *I wish you would tell me more after, (the class) how it was going. ... It would be good if you said, "... I didn't think that question went well, maybe you could say it this way" ... And then I would become a better teacher.*
>
> *If you said "I think you ought to do this" then I would probably have a try at that and then that would change the way I work - you see I want to change really.*

And in the ninth week of the project

> *I just want you to give me some reflections of what you think has been happening in the class ... That will make me think and maybe I'll be a better teacher. You don't have to agonize over this, just tell me (laughs).*

In retrospect I believe I should have shared insights earlier and drawn attention to the pragmatic implications of the teacher's questioning in addition to the dilemmas she faced as a result of the particular institutional context in which she worked.

Both Lather (1986a) and Oakley (1981) helped me to understand in theory that holding back my early impressions contradicted my underlying assumptions about research practice as a 'co-investigative' (Kyle & McCutcheon:1984) venture. To a certain extent withholding emerging analyses reinforced the implied 'correctness' of my account of the data when it was finally presented to the teacher in category form.

The above experience highlights a key issue in my approach to this study: researcher obligations to those involved in the research process. Following are three occurrences which reveal the contradictory nature of research requirements and researcher responsibility to the various participants involved in the study. They relate to the students' concern about recording, implicit acceptance of prejudice and exclusion of a male student. These were identified as significant ethical issues during discussions with critical friends.

5.4.2 Degree of control available to the women students

In recording classroom conversation, a number of women showed concern about taping procedures and outcomes. L was clearly uncomfortable about recording procedures and M pointed out that she had made a mistake on the tape and it would always be recorded. L resolved along with the other women to ask for the tape to be turned off if at any time they did not want sections of the discussion taped. This occurred a number of times throughout the study although I was generally the one to initiate it by asking "Do you want me to turn the tape off?" I did this when I suspected any uneasiness, when any of the women were reluctant to comply with reading requests from the teacher or when particularly sensitive or personal topics were being discussed. The latter included issues about women and rape and particular discussions about the funding crisis which the teacher did not want recorded.

Although I believed student concerns had been addressed at the time, later re-examination of the transcripts show limited input into the discussion by L. It is hard to know whether this is the result of using the tape recorder, lack of confidence on L's part, or lack of interest in an irrelevant topic. The options are endless; but obviously my desire for the women to 'control' the recording procedure was not seen by many of them as a matter entirely within their control.

5.4.3 Stereotyping and prejudicial remarks

A matter related to more general issues of research ethics involved stereotyping and prejudicial remarks made during the study. During discussion periods a number of contentious issues were raised. Topics covered included women and rape, homosexuality, and the rights and responsibilities of indigenous and ethnic groups. While my beliefs about some of these issues were known to the teacher I did not discuss or contest what I believed to be 'commonsense beliefs' about minorities or women as

expressed by the students and the teacher in this class. This decision was made as a result of the time constraints placed on the class in the study, and my uneasiness about imposing an agenda which was clearly not an explicit part of the teacher's or students' aim for the class. However, this decision also means that in practice the study did not contest the systematic reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices found in many dominant forms of Australian schooling and adult education provision.

5.4.3 Exclusion of a male student

A further issue concerned the composition of the class and my description of the students, which invariably implies they are all women. In fact one young male, a 16 year old, also attended the class. His attendance was irregular and his input into discussion minimal. The teacher and other women frequently referred to the 'all female' composition of the class and I have continued that pattern throughout this study. I have continued to talk of the class as 'the women' because the teacher and students constructed an image of the class which existed free of the influence, or 'presence' of men. I believe this allowed them to talk in the frank way they did in many of the more sensitive discussion periods. However in referring to the class as 'the women' this report actively excludes the young man.

5.5 Conclusions

In this study the development of a theoretical and conceptual research framework assisted me to explore the dilemmatic aspects of my research practice. However an idealized framework underpinned by notions of explicit ideology, ethical responsibility to participants and a collaborative mode of investigation also set up tensions which in practice were often not resolved satisfactorily within the constraints of the framework.

Throughout the study the emerging body of literature contesting the methodological implementation of critically oriented research was most useful (Lather:1986b, 1988, Ellsworth:1989, Kenway:1987). This literature turned the 'spirit of critique' inward and helped to establish a reflexive relationship between researcher, data and the teacher in this study. It enabled me to contest the knowledge produced within my theoretical, methodological and ethical 'idealized framework', as I attempted to cling to the central beliefs and practices supported by critical social science research.

What emerged most clearly from this study for me was the centrality of theory to practice and practice to theory. As a result of moving into the field of tertiary education I had removed myself from the day to day world of literacy teaching and learning. However in doing so I had read further afield as a tertiary lecturer and gained a deeper understanding of the ways in which literacy teaching and learning is constructed theoretically. A reflexive approach to this study allowed both researcher and participant perspectives of classroom interaction to influence the findings produced.

Chapter 6: Discussion of data

6.1 Introduction

This thesis contends that teacher questioning practices structure classroom participation, production and reproduction of knowledge, and the connections made between that knowledge and students' lives. In the previous chapter I presented data on three aspects of teacher questioning practices. They were:

1 the type of questions asked
2 the timing of questions
3 the patterns of questioning

This chapter will deal with how the above three factors converge to elicit a form of classroom interaction which is intentionally aimed at acknowledging individual student experience, and 'covering the content' of the lesson through turn-taking procedures. Unintentionally classroom discussion limits the examination of social issues and is restricted in its scope by teacher controlled and teacher dominated classroom discussion.

Other data on contextual aspects of classroom interaction, such as teacher intentions, session organization and staff development experiences and beliefs were presented in Chapter 4 and will be used to contextualize classroom talk. This data is further referred to in Chapter 7 to illuminate why different types of questions are asked and what is required to transform the teacher's practice to one of a dialogic encounter which contests 'the official shape of knowledge' (Shor and Freire:1987).

6.2 Types of questions

In the previous chapter I identified three types of teacher questions which:

- structure class procedures
- structure exploration of knowledge
- structure connections between knowledge explored and student experience.

6.2.1 Questions structuring class procedures

In this adult literacy classroom the students acknowledged the teacher's position of authority and understanding of educational procedures. Apart from matters of religion or issues related to the role of women they rarely disagreed with the teacher and generally accepted her advice and direction on matters of class programing.

Class management was accomplished in two ways. First, within the discussion period, little attention was paid to the negotiation of topics for discussion, or ways in which associated tasks would be initiated and completed. Needs and interests were negotiated on a 1:1 basis during phase one and three of the class session (see Appendix A, section 9).

Second, a specific form of management evolved within the class discussion period through the teacher's questions associated with class procedures. Procedural questions she asked were influenced by her attention to turn-taking as a means of involving all women. She says:

> *I often feel quite frustrated with the discussion ... that once again the same people are having a lot to say, not everyone is (expressing) their opinion.*
>
> *I don't always go right round the circle. ... (but) I'm trying to get everyone to take part. Some people override others.*

She adopts a variety of strategies to initiate, continue, or complete the activity designed for the lesson. Turntaking questions are often used and might include the following:

> *Could you take turns in reading this... Who - R could you read us the first one?*

or

> *How about S, you read us the next one?*

and

> *OK anyone want to say anything else on the MFP?*

Turn taking direction emerges as a recurring pattern of classroom management. It is evident in sequence B where turn-taking prevents both M and P from exploring further the tensions associated with doing things for themselves. This issue is taken up later in Section 6.4 where I discuss questioning patterns.

The teacher undertakes a process of negotiation with individual students in phase one of the session and on the basis of this negotiation she provides a topic and associated 'literacy task' which attempts to address students' stated needs regarding skills and knowledge. Once the discussion is underway there are few opportunities available for students to renegotiate the process, other than to opt out of turns at reading or turns at talk.

Moving away from a questioning pattern which maintains control of the direction and focus of discussion would require the teacher to rethink the teaching aims and intentions for the class, that is, to complete a reading of the written passage, that all students should have a turn and that turns should result in equal participation.

As a result of the above intentions and deliberate turn taking strategies the teacher unwittingly structures classroom talk so that she is either every alternate speaker or she speaks after brief responses from two students. In this way she gains a turn for each student turn rather than one turn within the round of the group.

6.2.2 Questions structuring exploration of knowledge

Questions within this category vary. They may focus on specific information, for example factual knowledge. In addition they might contest existing knowledge presented as factual in the written passage, or by any of the students in the class. Knowledge questions deal with specific words, ideas or information held by the teacher and embedded in the written passage.

A summary of questions in the Self Image transcript (see Chapter 4, Figure 7) shows that a total of 23 questions examine knowledge or information about the topic. 10 are questions relating to factual knowledge about self image and all 10 questions are presented as cloze questions from the text requiring students to complete blank spaces in the written passage. For example:

> *Tr: (reading) The more you tell your brother and your husband and your neighbour and your bank manager that you are a hopeless ...?*
> *?: case.*
> *Tr: Case (reading) The more you believe it, the more deeply embedded that self image be ... ?*
> *?: becomes.*

In the Assertiveness transcript 16 questions 'examine knowledge' and of these 10 require answers about factual information. In contrast to the previous examples, however, these questions are not tied to the written passage by the use of cloze exercises. Rather they require the student to use her own knowledge of the issue to answer what is presented as a factual question.

> *Tr: What does assertiveness mean P? If you are assertive, what does it mean, do you know?*
> *P: Well you're probably a person that can put your view forward.*

The balance between cloze questions and factual questions is significant if 'active' literacy is intended as an outcome of class activities. By asking cloze questions the teacher keeps the students focussed on the issue via the passage under discussion. Students must use prior knowledge of language and their understandings of the passage to predict the word which will fill the gap. However, there is only a limited range of words to fill the gap. These questions might extend student vocabulary relating to issues as they are presented in the written passage, but there is no indication that such activities lead to a greater understanding of the issues. Their application to 'active' literacy is therefore limited. By not addressing the ideological assumptions embedded in each of the statements they have limited impact on the development of critical literacy.

Many students express a desire to 'improve their vocab and spelling' when attending literacy classes. Cloze exercises provide a means of addressing this request, but they also set up a pattern of communication in the classroom which resembles Dillon's (1983) pattern of recitation whereby teachers ask questions and students provide

answers. Furthermore a concentration on factual questions about the passage suggests meaning is embedded within the written passage rather than emerging from interaction between the reader, the passage and the social context.

There are other questions in the transcripts that do structure the exploration of knowledge by contesting ideas, values and beliefs embedded in the written passage. In the Self Image discussion, of the 23 teacher questions exploring information, 13 questions ask students to think more broadly about the issue by asking them to contest commonsense ideas of self image as presented in the written passage. Therefore in this discussion 10 questions about knowledge were 'factual' and tied to the passage by cloze exercises, and 13 questions contested the ideas in the passage.

Of the contestable questions the teacher asks "Why?" "Why not?" "Why did you do that?" She encourages the students to think beyond immediate action. During the Self Image discussion she asks:

> *Now really, do you believe that? Do you all think that that's true, that we are what we think?*

She asks the students to problematize the development of self-image. Such invitations to inquiry question commonsense understandings of the written passage, in this instance, that individuals are totally responsible for the quality of their lives. They encourage students to think beyond their individual experience when seeking possible explanations of, or solutions to, issues affecting their lives. These questions are essential to critical literacy development and are the means by which the teacher questions the 'official shape of knowledge' (Shor and Freire:1987). The teacher in this study is not uncomfortable with their use, however the posing of such questions is not the only precondition for critical literacy development. Of the 13 contesting questions asked in the Self Image discussion, 5 have timing restrictions as identified in section 4.2.4, 5 are actually related to discussion with the volunteer tutor and 3 are embedded within the I-R, I-R, pattern described in sequence B. Both the timing and patterns of questions asked influence the forms of literacy developed through classroom interaction and these issues are taken up in sections 6.3 and 6.4.

In summary, the questions which structure knowledge exploration do many things. The questions focus student exploration on key information about issues which interest the students or influence their lives. In connection with the written passage questions perform a subtle 'piloting' function (Perrott:1988) which keeps students on task addressing the issue at hand and assist the teacher to pace the lesson to an appropriate conclusion on completed reading of the written passage. Additionally contesting questions within this category have the potential to raise what Brookfield (1987) calls 'missing perspectives' by posing questions which might reveal alternative ways of viewing the issue.

6.2.3 Questions structuring connections between knowledge explored and student experience.

The third category concerns questions about how knowledge is related to students' lives. Within a critical sociological perspective this category highlights the constraints inherent in individualizing social interaction to such an extent that the structural conditions which shape personal lives are submerged by individual concerns.

Teaching in this class is geared to meeting students' stated literacy needs. Classroom issues are examined because the teacher has heard the students voice some interest in a topic or confusion about a task. But she also believes these requests or statements signal other social needs, not necessarily linked to functional literacy tasks.

> *I feel conscious that (reading and writing) is not everything that needs to be improved in the class. What has been coming out since you have been here is a lot of stuff about how inadequate they feel about themselves.*

Both Self Image and Assertiveness were included as topics for discussion because the teacher interpreted students' comments to indicate they felt a lack of self confidence and limited control over the direction their lives are taking. All Category C questions in these discussions focus on individual experiences.

In the Self Image discussion the teacher asks

> *Now how do you all respond to a compliment?*
> *Right has anyone else had a compliment lately?*

The women reply to the questions, exploring ways in which they respond to compliments received. In the Assertiveness discussion the women examine the question from the written passage "Why don't we always assert ourselves?" The teacher focuses the discussion (see Sequence C), asking

> *Do you remember when you were young being told just to be quiet and that sort of whole feeling?*

In the discussion which follows R, D (volunteer tutor), L and G all offer brief examples of their own experiences of being silenced as children. Teacher questioning practices encourage students to relay their own experience. In keeping the discussion oriented towards personal experience the teacher limits opportunities for examining systematically why the women feel unable to allocate time or resources for themselves, how the messages they received as children are implicated in their non-assertive behaviour as adults and why they continue as adults to feel they are non-assertive.

6.2.4 Summary: types of teacher questions

This study has examined three types of teacher questions from the classroom discussions in this study. The distinctions are useful for three reasons. First, they highlight through questioning practices the structuring of class procedures, implicit yet not articulated overtly in Wallerstein's (1983) framework, as a key aspect of classroom interaction.

Second, category B questions emphasize the various ways in which knowledge is constructed through cloze questions which require students to match answers, through 'factual' questions which 'fill in' information on the topic under discussion and questions contesting 'factual' information presented in the written passage.

Third, category C questions raise doubts about the usefulness of emphasizing individual student experience and personalized student study programs. As previously noted, relating issues to students' lives is a central feature of literacy tuition. An overly narrow focus on the life of the individual however, submerges the social conditions which shape those lives. Such approaches support ideologies of individualism (Keddie:1980) which locate control of social conditions with individuals, and ignore the role of collective action in individual and social domination and oppression and the necessary preconditions for change.

Many adult literacy teachers have had limited staff development and training opportunities (CATALPA:1990, DEET:1990, Tillett:1989). Consistent with other educational research (Susskind in Dillon:1983:37, Young:1984) it cannot be assumed that adult literacy teachers are aware of the types of questions they ask, the controlling nature of their questions, or the range of intended and unintended outcomes their questioning practices might support. In this study the teacher said

> *I would have had no idea that I talked that amount. Before we did this study, if you'd asked me I wouldn't have thought that (I talked so much). ... I mean I didn't sit down and think these are the sorts of questions I could ask, did I? This is all very nice that you have analysed them and that'll make me a better teacher for later because I'll think about when I ask questions.*

The identification of three types of teacher questions assists teachers to analyse the different purposes of their questions and the extent to which each type of question is expanding or constraining student participation, exploration of knowledge in terms of its content and connections to life experience.

In this particular classroom class procedure questions are strongly influenced by the teacher's belief that turn taking is an important part of classroom interaction. Exploration of knowledge is shaped in the discussion period by a written passage which establishes, but also provides space to contest, knowledge and understandings of the issue under discussion. Exploration is related to the teacher's belief that discussion needs to be related to students' individual experiences and is also shaped by the need to complete the task and cover the content necessary to adequately address the follow up literacy activity. The intersection of these issues will be taken up again later in this chapter.

6.3 Time and Timing

Adult literacy classes in this study are of 2-3 hours duration, once a week, and literacy development is influenced by this in different ways. In this study teaching practice is influence by a number of time constraints.

1 the overall structure of the course consists of three hour sessions over one ten week term
2 the lesson structure in this class includes three different phases to accommodate student and teacher aims
3 the teacher paces the discussion period to enable students to return to individual work for a half hour period before the end of the session
4 external demands on the teacher's time away from class influencepreparation of questions and adequate time to reflect on discussion outcomes.

During the period of this study the teacher had limited time to prepare her classes. The funding crisis, on top of other coordination and administrative demands, erodes her preparation time. There is little time to consider the actual questions she asks, the framing of them within the class, and the responses she might offer. The scope of the current study prevents these aspects of time constraints being taken up here, but they are issues for further study and would inform an exploration of broader staff development needs regarding the demands made of literacy teachers.

In this section I will examine the frequency of questions, that is, how many are asked, how often they are asked and how much time is allowed for student responses.

Two patterns emerge on closer examination of the timing of questions in the transcript.

1 Number and frequency: many teacher questions are asked in this classroom and questions are often asked in clusters.
2 Restricted response: questions are often asked with no space for student response.

1 Frequency

Figure 8 shows the number of questions, as defined in Chapter 3 section 3.6.2, asked in each discussion period.

	Discussion period				
	1	2	3	4	5
Total teacher talk	58	102	85	89	140
Questions in teacher talk	50	74	51	64	93

Figure 8 No. of teacher questions asked.

Questions are frequent. Given that most discussion periods were of 45 to 50 minutes duration teacher questions occurred at least one per minute. When lengthy reading from the written passage is considered the frequency of teacher questions is even higher.

2 Restricted response

Figure 9. shows the relative numbers of teacher questions which have been identified as restricted. Following Dillon (1983), restricted questions were those where a 3 second or less space occurred between the teacher's question and her continuation of talk.

	Discussion Topic				
	1	2	3	4	5
Total teacher questions	50	74	57	64	93
Time restricted questions	16	27	10	25	27
Restricted questions as percentage of teacher questions	32	36	20	39	29

Figure 9 No of restricted questions.

While quantitative measures have limited use in this study percentages have been shown in the above table to highlight the proportion of restricted questions. In 4 of the 5 transcripts at least thirty percent of the teacher's questions leave a 3 second or less space before she continues her talk. However, restricted questions and the patterns of continuation of teacher's talk are not homogeneous. Sometimes she asks a series of questions which blur the point of the questions.

> *Tr: Right has anyone else had a compliment lately? What do you say when people say you look nice? What do you say L? Come on L what do you say? Do you say thank you? Do you giggle, and say that you don't believe them? Do you all three believe it if someone says you're lovely, you're clever and charming? you just say thank you?*

At other times questions are asked and a framework for the answer provided by the teacher immediately, thus defining the framework for student responses.

> *Tr: (reading) What this means is that we decide our own self-image. We decide on our own worth and decide how much happiness to expect. Now before we go on, what do you think about that? (1 sec) I have definitely - this rings a bell straight away with me... (She goes on to give her example).*

The above restricted time for a student response and the teacher response support the message in the written passage which suggests that the women do have control over their own level of happiness. There is no opportunity to contest this even though a 'contesting' question has been asked. The teacher believed the number of questions helped students pay attention to the passage.

> *I think I'm probably just clarifying. You know, we're reading this (information) and I'm just throwing in the odd questions to make them keep paying attention to the discussions or what we're reading.*

And in providing an answer to her own question she wanted to give them a 'real life' example as a guide. In reflecting on my analysis, however, she considered other courses of action.

> *With hindsight maybe I could have waited longer and then given them an example. ... As soon as I give them a gap they do fill it so I don't know why I didn't give them more of a gap.*

In summary, time available to the teacher to 'prepare, pose and ponder' (Dillon:1988) the questions she asks in the classroom is limited, however this aspect of questioning is beyond the scope of the current study. The timing of the teacher's questions influences participation in classroom talk through

1 the number of questions she asks to 'pilot' (Perrott:1988) classroom discussion
2 the limited time available for student responses where restricted questions are posed and
3 teacher talk which indicates the framework for continuing discussion after posing a restricted question.

The predominance of teacher talk in the classroom and the attention to turn-taking also influence classroom participation, however these issues are best taken up in the next section which examines patterns of classroom interaction.

6.4 Patterns of questioning

My third focus in the discussion of data deals with patterns of questioning evident in the transcripts. Examination of the transcripts suggests that some of the patterns emerging in previous research on classroom talk in schools are confirmed by this study (Dillon:1983:12):

1 Student talk is usually in response to an initiation by the teacher. Although the response is not always confined to a direct answer it rarely moves off task.
2 While the teacher is not every alternate speaker there is a distinct pattern of talk which establishes the teacher as either every alternate speaker or speaking after brief responses from two students. Classroom talk is repeatedly channelled through the teacher.
3 Students rarely ask questions.

Discussion	1	2	3	4	5
No of student questions	6	5	10	13	10
No of teacher questions	50	74	51	64	93

Figure 10 No of student questions.

4 When students do ask questions they are generally about procedure or for clarification. For example:

It's different from little miss know it all, is it? You know what I mean?
Where? (Number) 19?
Is it the same kind of thing?
Is that right (correct)?
How many? I don't believe it?
Could I what?
What was that, I'm sorry?
What kind of person are they?

Young's (1987) analysis of classroom interaction provides further insights into questioning patterns in the classroom and in contrast to Dillon, makes explicit the links between teacher questioning and social control. Analysis of patterns in this study focused on the presence of the IRF pattern within classroom talk. The pattern consisting of the following elements: a teacher initiation (I), a student response (R), and teacher feedback (F), was chosen to further explore Young's contention that the cycle is a restrictive influence on classroom interaction. In addressing the IRF cycle, however the patterns of teacher questions in this study are not always represented by cyclical I - R -F patterns throughout the transcript.

I outline what I believe to be two other common patterns in these transcripts and discuss connections between these patterns and literacy development in the class.

The basic elements of the patterns are similar to the IRF cycle:

+ initiation (I)
+ response (R)
+ feedback (F)
+ response by the teacher (Rt)

The last element represents a response by the teacher which indicates participatory and personal involvement throughout the course of the discussion. Rt represents her contribution of her own feelings and experiences rather than evaluative feedback (F) or an initiating contribution (I). For example:

Oh isn't that sad. (Rt)
I do that all the time. (Rt)

The following sequences, presented as data in Chapter 4, illustrate some of the ways in which patterns of teacher questioning establish a form of control over classroom talk which works towards the explicit objectives of turn taking and completion of the written passage. Implicitly, questioning supports reproduction of knowledge consistent with the ideological assumptions embedded in the written passage, most of which support commonsense views of literacy development. This pattern suggests that for the teacher, restricted discussion, whether intentional or not, is appropriate for developing literacy.

The first sequence provides an example of teacher reformulations (Young,1984) occurring in classrooms. The most common type, where teachers reword student responses to fit with the direction and content of the lesson, has been addressed here.

Sequence A

I Tr: What are you hopeless at?

R S: I would say remembering things. My husband knows if I think something is right and I go forward and say it and then I say "Oh, why didn't I think first'. Little things like that. I'm not really in control, and that's (why) I call myself hopeless.

F Tr: **Right, you feel, you jump in without thinking, which you are likely to do sometimes. Yes, well, that happens all the time.**

I Anyone else got little messages in their head that they're not good at something and they keep on doing it? (3 seconds). No, well we'll go on with that.

Rt I think shyness is one thing.

R ?: Some people would say confidence - lack of confidence.

F Tr: Yes, confidence. A lot of people have that feeling. Yeah. I'm not too good -

R L: Communicate

I Tr: What?

R L: Communicate

F Tr: **You feel a bit awkward about communicating. Yes, therefore if you think on thinking that, that's probably the way you're going to be. Shyness comes along with that lack of confidence. Some people take that role on. 'I'm shy, you know, I'm really no good at communicating.' Because they think that way, that's the way they are**. Let's go on. I don't feel like keeping on reading, let's go on to compliments.

I S, will you read about compliments?

This pattern shows two IRF cycles in which the teacher reformulates student talk as part of her feedback. The teacher's initial response to S reformulates the answer in 'correct English' providing an appropriate language model and supporting the focus of the written passage. She then provides a new invitation to inquiry, which after a brief pause is self answered, however this doesn't prevent students from offering their own responses. Later in the sequence the teacher reformulates another response

reinforcing the notion that people can be responsible for their own mental state and for changing that state. The lesson is guided towards completion through the teacher structuring turn taking and ensuring a complete reading of the written passage.

In the above sequence there is no structural opportunity to contest teacher reformulations (Young:1984). Reformulations are followed by a new invitation to inquiry which assists the teacher to meet her aims for the lesson. Teacher questions are procedural, relating to clarification and turn-taking, or personal, relating to the student's individual experience. Both types of questions limit the amount of extended discussion on the issue, and provide the 'coherence and direction' (Young:1984) required for the lesson to be completed.

Another pattern, shown below, occurs early in the Assertiveness discussion. The pattern contains questions which focus on personal experiences (beginning of the sequence) and provide procedural direction, rather than a teacher question to continue class activity (end of sequence).

Sequence C

I	Tr: Do you remember when you were young being told just tobe quiet and that sort of whole feeling?
R	R: All the time.
F	Tr: Yes, all the time. (interruptions by students, not asked as individuals)
R	R: Children should be seen and not heard.
F	Tr: Right there you are.
R	D: Nothing to do with you.
F	Tr: That's right. Yes, that's right.
R	D: I'm still being told that.
R	R: No one asked for your opinion.
F	Tr: Yes, that's right, all of that.
R	D: If we want your opinion we'll ask for it.
R	Tr: Oh, beautiful, exactly so maybe it's hard when you always have that.
R	L: Listen to your elders, you know like.
R	G: Respect your elders.
R	L: Yeah like be quiet and you know what I mean.
F	Tr: Huh mm mm mm.
Rt	I do that at all the time.
R	G: "Don't be cheeky girls" is at our house - (inaudible)
F	Tr: Alright ... R you're reading so you could read some more.

This sequence shows persistent feedback by the teacher to encourage students (and the volunteer tutor) to share personal recollections. The feedback is implicitly evaluative in that it constantly affirms students are on the 'right track'; that is, their responses are appropriate to the initial inquiry to remember childhood experiences of silencing. The women are encouraged to spontaneously contribute and respond to

each other's experiences. After a number of student responses 'teaching behaviour' emerges at the end of this sequence to again guide the class in its purpose - a complete reading of the text to assist students in understanding the issue of assertiveness.

A similar pattern is reflected in sequence B below, however this time the sequence (in the first part) shows recurring teacher initiations, rather than the recurring feedback component so predominant in sequence C.

Sequence B

I Tr: I'll put a question to you. Do you feel comfortable doing things that add to your life?
R J: Yes, all of a sudden, I say 'I'm going to do that' and I go and do it.
I Tr: And you feel okay about that?
R L: Sometimes.
R ?: Not very often.
I Tr: Are you working on it? M do you ever take some time for yourself?
R M: Not often.
I Tr: And why not? Come on, you three (to M, P, and R) why not?
R M: With me it's been to do with X. ... he hates to see people spend money. So I think, 'Oh I'd like that.' And then I think, 'I can't do that I can't spend money on myself'.
I Tr: What about you, P?
R P: Well I've been ... making myself do things like today ... (Coming to the class) I have to force myself. I have to really force myself before I (come).
F Tr: (interrupts) Force yourself to do things for you. Alright, we'll keep working on it.
R P: And it makes it harder when you get there because then you're not relaxed - things just don't come naturally.
F Tr: It will come naturally coming to this class. (Everybody talking)
R P: Until you get used to your surroundings and you settle in.
R S: I think we all come used to that life.
Tr: Maybe we'll ask G, everyone has a turn.
I Do you do these things for yourself G or do you feel guilty about it?

Within this sequence the teacher initiates a number of questions, but rarely provides feedback to complete the cycle in the format Young (1987) describes. Rather, she initiates a similar question to another student; thus setting up a series of I-R, I-R, I-R, cycles. In the first section of this sequence there is no feedback element to the cycles; implicit approval of students' contributions has been established by the teacher within previous lessons or implied, by the teacher moving on with a new question. As mentioned in the expectations for discussion the teacher has told the women that 'everybody's opinion is valued' so it would appear that no formal 'feedback' or reply from the teacher is required.

When students respond for longer periods, as P and M do in the sequence, the teacher's feedback to the response shifts the focus to another student.

What about you P?

The concern for turn taking reinforces the teacher's control of classroom talk although it is intended to encourage equal participation of all students. While she is not always every second speaker it is uncommon for more than two students to speak before teacher talk reemerges. In her turn in sequence B, P seeks to expand upon her experience. Twice she overrides the teacher's attempt at closure of her response. Finally P is stopped by a teacher appeal for equal airspace for other students. The teacher says

Maybe we'll ask G, everyone has a turn

and redirects classroom discussion successfully to ensure participation of all students. While teacher feedback has an evaluative influence on student response it is turn taking, via teacher initiations, which establishes speaking rights within the class and maintains the teacher's dominant position in the classroom talk; patterns of interaction in this class generally dictate that the teacher is every second speaker. However, interviews with students show they believe they are each given a voice in this class, and they believe the attention to turn taking is actually an affirmation of their own contributions. R said that everyone gets a say in this teacher's class and they all get to hear what other people think.

The teacher acknowledged the control turn taking established within classroom talk.

> *I did have a controlling influence. I tried to stop people from taking over. ... It's a bit powerful for me isn't it, because I mean I can take over whenever I like.*

She believed that the dynamics within the class required that she balance the contribution each student was able to offer however, and added.

> *I agree, I have lots of controlling influence and I think I'll continue to do that. I still think it's important that everybody gets a go.*

6.5 The role of the written passage and the discussion period

The written passages used in this study also provide a form of control over classroom interaction. Generally, passages are two to three pages long and although simplified, the concepts and language still present difficulties for the women in this class. Even when newspaper articles are discussed, as in the Multifunction Polis discussion (number 5) or the Letters to the Editor session (number 4), the time taken to read the passage takes up most of the discussion period.

As a result of the length and nature of written passages, limited time is available for further exploration of assumptions contained in the passage. Furthermore, this focus on the passage reinforces perceptions that literacy is about understanding the passage as is rather than interpretation of the words and meanings as constructed by the women.

Focusing on the written passage within the discussion period takes up most of the time; the passage defines the parameters of the discussion. In addition the teacher also has to accommodate the wide range of literacy abilities within the class. This impacts on how she achieves her instructional aim, a complete reading of the passage. Difficult passages such as the Assertiveness passage require the teacher to clarify words, their meanings and occasionally background detail to the topic in order that the students can understand the passage and participate in its reading. This is less of an issue for more readable passages such as the Mother's Day article.

In addition, in the Assertiveness transcript the focus on individual experience and attention to the messages in the written passage support an individualist view of personal development. The following extract from the Assertiveness passage illustrates this.

> *The ability to express feelings constructively and to be open to others about what you want, maximizes the chances of your getting the kind of relationship you want, the job you want, the friends you want, the society you want, the life you want.*

The Self Image passage supports this notion of personal growth.

> *We create our own quality of life based on our own happiness self image.*

The Assertiveness and Self Image passages provide commonsense explanations of personal and social change through the development of interpersonal skills.

At one level the Assertiveness passage defines the boundaries of knowledge for the lesson. It presents an overview of issues required to understand assertiveness. Questions from the passage establish these as follows:

> *What is so good about being assertive?*
> *Why don't we always assert ourselves?*
> *What happens when one assertive person meets another assertive person?*
> *Why are we non-assertive?*
> *What are the consequences of not being assertive?*

The teacher added the following questions to the top of the written passage and used them to begin the classroom discussion.

> *What does assertive mean?*
> *What does aggressive mean?*

While guidelines for assertive behaviour are useful the women suggest that assertiveness is more of an issue for them when related to family and friends. P says

> *I can be as assertive as I like with people I don't know, but people that I know, that I'm friends with, I'm inclined to let them speak to me and treat me in ways that I don't like and it makes me quite angry that they do that.*

And later in the same discussion the teacher says

> *I don't know if any of this is going to help you P? Trouble is it's a close friend. I've got someone who is a neighbour like R talks about. I don't let them in (to my house).*

Even though the written passage implies a 1:1 relation between successful implementation of interpersonal skills and a "happy life", both the teacher and P acknowledge above the problems associated with being assertive with friends. In the Assertiveness passage, resolution of conflict is located within assertive strategies, the implication of the passage being if the strategies are effected then conflict will be resolved. For example, the passage doesn't talk about what close friends or spouses might do as a result of being confronted with assertive behaviour, and how such confrontation will affect the interpersonal dynamics between the individuals concerned. The class discussion does not develop this further, other than stating 'you both have a better chance of getting your needs met'.

While my analysis suggests that issues are explored in only superficial ways, students do not necessarily see classroom interaction as constrained. The passage provides new information and insights which enable the students to think about the topic, and in some cases go away and talk about it with others or complete the associated literacy task set by the teacher, at their leisure. J says about the Multi-function Polis discussion:

> *Firstly I have to think about it (the MFP). What it was going to be. I could not say what it is because I did not know anything about it. ... I asked a friend about that ... And then I read more in the paper. ... Talk with other people. Listen to the wireless.*

She acknowledges the evolving process of understanding issues raised during the discussion period. The teacher also acknowledges the potential for the effects of discussion to extend beyond the specific period for talk:

> *(The discussion) is usually an introduction to work they are going to do on their own. What I would like (the students) to think about at home is why they got the message (about poor selfimage) ...*

In a class discussion R reveals her reflections on the usefulness of discussions.

> *I didn't think we were ever going to do this (have discussions). But I think it's good - makes you stop and think about issues more and get more confident.*

And in an interview she says

> *We are all at different stages (of literacy development) but everybody has the same problem. It's not only me.*

It is questionable whether she would gain this insight if there were no discussion period to draw the group together.

M believes the discussion:

> *Helps me a lot, because I was at a bad stage ... before I took this class ... and decided that I had to start overcoming some of my fears and one of my greatest fears was of school. So I came in here and I was shaking at the knees and I'm starting to feel a lot more relaxed now.*

The topics for discussion relate to the students' lives away from the classroom. The teacher is successful in weaving central issues of their lives into the fabric of class activities. The students themselves believe she has a good understanding of their needs and is always aware of their interests. R said the teacher in this study keeps up with her, she follows the problems the different students have - even when the students get frustrated, she understands this. R had tried other classes but felt like a 'fish out of water'. The teacher in the other class didn't know what her (R's) goals were, but this teacher had a different way of doing things, 'of holding the class together'. This was a recurring feature of both the teacher's and the students' description of the class. They were a group. (1)

Each discussion topic provides the students with a means of discussing issues relevant to them, but the discussion period was rarely seen to be explicitly related to the goals they expressed on first joining the class. M says:

> *Spelling was something that I wanted to improve. ... I thought once I know how to spell I know how to do anything, (but) it didn't come that way. ... I find out more about what's going on around me. Up until now it's mainly been just the children and housework ... and now these things that have been brought up (in discussion), we've been talking about them and finding out more ... there's things now that I have become more aware of through these discussions.*

Some of the women did articulate the merits of discussion but S added:

> *The only thing is that by learning a lot about a lot of things, discussing and writing it would take much longer to be able to put (it) in words ... you know it takes longer to learn.*

She identifies the difference between shallow knowledge and understanding - 'we got a broad mind of things', but also recognises that this difference involves time:

> *A long time before you can write it down, but it would be a good one, once you learn a lot but it would take many years.*

The students gain support from discussion periods, and are able to explore issues related to their own lives, however, the underlying assumptions of the written passage generally reinforce the women's beliefs that they alone are responsible for the quality of their lives. The teacher and P identified that there is a difference between 'what you are supposed to do' and how assertiveness is played out in real situations, but in most discussion periods the contradictions between 'what we should do' and 'what we do do' remain largely unexamined.

6.6 Conclusions

Critical ethnographies as described by Brodkey (1987), Kenway (1987), and Quantz and O'Connor (1988) attempt to reveal the various voices of participants, recognizing that all will share a different view of social interaction. My interpretation has been guided as much by what is missing from classroom interaction as what is present in the transcripts. In addition I have tried to show how the teacher and the women view classroom interaction and how at times my interpretation is contradicted within the data.

The data presented in this study identifies three aspects of teacher questioning:

1 types of questions
2 timing of questions
3 patterns of questions

It is clear that all types of questions structure classroom interaction. The teacher's procedural questions organize turns at talk. Questions about information or knowledge keep the lesson 'on track' by focusing on the written passage. Teacher questions which limit exploration of life issues to the context of individual experience limit understandings of how social conditions affect students' lives.

Three sequences were presented to further establish restrictive influences operating on classroom discussion. Within these sequences, types of questions, timing and questioning patterns all combine to assist teacher control of classroom interactions, knowledge production and reproduction and connections students make with their own life experiences. When the teacher asks the women to contest the 'official shape of knowledge' (Shor and Freire:1987) as presented in the written passage the posing of the question may not take into account space for student responses. (See section 6.2.2 for discussion of questions in the Self Image transcript.) When space is available for student responses, teacher questions may constrain those responses by limiting understanding within the realm of individual experience. When the teacher provides feedback it 'thins out' responses by turn-taking practices which encourage all students to participate. In addition, the feedback sometimes reformulates student responses to maintain consistency with teaching aims and the ideological underpinnings of the written passage. Thus type, timing and patterning of questions have the potential to expand or limit possibilities for exploration but action on one aspect in isolation is no guarantee of a questioning outcome which 'fosters inquiry' (Young:1990).

Some of the above teacher actions are deliberate. The teacher is explicit about students who speak extensively in the discussion period and about managing turn taking.

> *... some people are a bit long-winded in saying what they want to say.*

Turn-taking also depends on the topic being discussed and so the teacher asks particular students with relevant experience to contribute. She says

> *I know that R might have a very valuable opinion to make ... I often feel quite frustrated with the discussion though, that once again the same people are having a lot to say, not everyone is getting their opinion.*

In addition the teacher believed that issues should relate to students' lives and thus she encourages a focus on their individual experience.

Her questioning behaviour, however has other characteristics which were not necessarily part of a deliberate effort to involve students or to exclude them from the discussion, and she was not aware of the unintended outcomes of these practices. She did not intend to limit student understanding of the issue by focusing discussion through a written passage, nor did she intend to restrict the students' understandings of the connections between private issues and social conditions by prioritizing individual experience. Turn taking was intended to give all students a chance to participate but she was not aware that this gave her such a central position in classroom discussion. She believed her contribution to discussion was no more than any other member of the class. In fact she alternated turns with each individual student.

The above strategies were not undertaken with a view to limiting literacy development per se, in fact, initially the teacher believed her teaching strategies would expand understandings of topics and provide a spread of contributions to discussion, thus assisting future literacy development. Her strategies were intentionally aimed at supporting 'active' literacy strategies outlined in current literacy definitions supported by the ACAL and other major literacy organizations, that is that literacy involves reading and writing, but it is also intricately connected to the listening, speaking and thinking which underpin reading and writing.

The next chapter connects the patterns of classroom interaction described in this chapter to issues of staff development. I examine how teaching practices in this study are constrained by factors external to the discussion period and the implications this has for staff development which seeks to establish a viable radical pedagogy of adult literacy.

Endnotes

1 I have noted in Chapter 5 however that O was not seen to be a part of the group and was referred to frequently by the teacher and the women as 'not really fitting'.

Chapter 7: Dialogue questioning and staff development

7.1 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the development of a viable pedagogy of adult literacy which is consistent with claims that literacy assists people's ability to understand and shape the direction of their lives. In this chapter I draw together the key issues of the study, critical literacy and teacher questioning as the basis of the dialogic process which radical educators propose is a central element of emancipatory education. I note the teaching aims in the class in this study, and the tensions the teacher faces in meeting these aims. I identify the constraints on teacher questioning and examine relations between these constraints and the development of critical literacy. I relate the above issues to the requirements of staff development from a radical education framework which seeks to develop a viable radical pedagogy.

Throughout this discussion I am mindful of Freire's (1970) and Horsman's (1989) concerns that a viable radical pedagogy cannot be transplanted from the writings of third world educational settings. Rather it must be 'reinvented' (Freire:1970) within a Western industrialized context to take account of the political, socio-cultural and economic similarities and differences between these worlds and the people who live in them. In the context of the radical tradition I have proposed that adult literacy teachers to a large extent are responsible for establishing patterns of classroom interaction. However, while adult literacy teachers may have more experience than students of formal educational processes, in the 'relearning' classroom advocated by Shor (1987) teachers and students join in a process of dialogue to reconstruct a view of the world which acknowledges the significant cultural, economic and social differences existing between the two parties.

7.2 Dialogue and critical literacy

In the field of adult literacy Paulo Freire has been a significant voice in the literature inspiring many writers (Wallerstein:1983, Bee:1989) to further develop a practical understanding of emancipatory adult literacy education. Dialogue is central to emancipatory literacy as well as Ira Shor's notion of the 'relearning' classroom. Dialogue encourages learners to think critically about the 'naturalness' of explanations of social interaction; in doing so students contest 'official knowledge' as portrayed by traditional models of education and dominant educational texts. In addition dialogue requires that teachers and teacher educators establish new relations of power in their classrooms so that learners and teachers 'relearn' rather than transfer knowledge.

However such an approach is fraught with difficulties. Dialogue is not a technical skill which can be outlined as a series of steps. It is a labyrinthine journey of explorations probing the nature of issues and their relevance to learners' and teachers' lives. It

results in action; however, in the classroom this action is constrained by social and political contexts. Dialogue and subsequent action will be shaped according to the everchanging needs of teachers and learners within the class, in addition to the external political and economic factors impacting on the educational setting. By definition it is not a method; rather it is a fluid process which Shor (1987:102) claims can revert to 'dogma' if not practised as a 'genuine open exchange' between participants. Thus a simple desire to communicate with students is not enough to engender a dialogic classroom.

While the implementation of 'how-to' frameworks holds the potential to 'launder' (McLaren:1989) the political process of dialogue, Wallerstein has usefully highlighted four elements she believes are necessary to establish meaningful dialogue between teachers and students: teachers need to listen to students and recognise the complexity of their lives; classroom issues need to be relevant to students' lives; examination of issues should actively expose the relationship between the individual experiences of each student and the systematic way in which their experiences are symptomatic of structural forms of oppression embedded in the economic, political and socio-cultural structure of society; and dialogue should arrive at forms of social and individual action which are capable of transforming existing social inequities. It is in the last two elements that the teacher's practices in this study fall short of critical literacy.

While supporting the intent of work by Freire and particularly Freire and Macedo (1987) on establishing dialogic practice, Rockhill (1988) has pointed out that Freire's statements tend to assume a unity among teachers and students which is illusory in Western industrialized societies. Thus questioning frameworks such as Wallerstein's and the analyses developed in this study must be set within the socio-cultural and political context of classrooms which recognise the realities of students' and teachers' diverse and often antagonistic backgrounds and experiences. If this is not done the frameworks resemble 'teaching' techniques noted by Simon (1987) to have limited relevance to the development of a critical pedagogy. I take this point up later in this chapter when I discuss staff development requirements for dialogic practice.

7.3 Context of the classroom in this study

As the teacher undertakes literacy development in the class in this study she has many different aims which I have presented previously in Chapter 4 section 4.1.1. These aims encompass stated student needs and teacher aims which anticipate students' future needs. As the teacher attempts to meet both she is faced with a series of tensions about what to teach, and how and when to address specific aspects of literacy development. The tensions she faces are related to four areas: the comfort and/or challenge inherent in the learning environment, the priority given to individual and/or group needs, the amount of printed or oral work, or the particular type of literacy outcome to be achieved within the class, and the level of exploration of an issue which could reasonably be achieved during the discussion period without 'losing' student interest.

The teacher's task is to resolve these tensions through her teaching practice bearing in mind the nature of literacy provision as it is offered by her DETAFE college, and that she is only employed half time.

Throughout interviews the teacher returned to the tensions, which are magnified by her belief that she must meet the students' expectations of her as 'teacher figure', and the limited amount of time available to develop the above aims through class activities. She also believed she should consider alternative ways of operating in literacy classes.

From this study it is evident that the type of questions the teacher asks, the timing of her questions and the feedback she offers all converge on the social relations of the classroom to bring about a form of communication which signals not only what literacy is, but also how it should be practised. The teacher's beliefs as well as student expectations about literacy shape how it is practised in the classroom. The texts used to achieve literacy development further impact on the forms of literacy emerging from the classroom activities.

In the classroom in this study the pattern of communication established by the teacher gives students a voice they are denied in other areas of their lives. The teacher listens. She hears the students articulate the recurring feelings of pleasure and dissatisfaction of their existing social settings and she responds to them as individuals. She is able to identify particular literacy skills which need development. She is concerned about personal, interpersonal and academic development, and acknowledges their integrated nature. She realizes that some of the women are seeking a way out of the current economic and social situation in which they find themselves and that they believe literacy will change the quality of their lives. She offers a haven in which students are able to grow personally and academically.

But most literacy development in the class in this study is geared towards completion of tasks aimed at developing written outcomes based on limited exploration beyond the taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the written passages which guide the discussion. Discussion often implies there is a solution to issues discussed, rather than adopting a 'problem-posing' (Freire: 1970, Wallerstein: 1983, Smyth: 1987) approach which suggests alternative ways of viewing social interaction.

In this study conditions exist which make literacy teaching difficult. Courses are structured around three hour sessions within a ten week term. The students' language and literacy skills vary markedly and the range of identified student needs is diverse (although many are related generally to gaining or improving employment opportunities). This class, like many other adult literacy classes, is set up in theory to accommodate the diversity of abilities and needs found in many basic education and adult literacy classes. See Davison, Ennis et al (1988) for further examples. However, in the class in this study the six teaching aims outlined in Chapter 4 are often antagonistic, and individual needs may not always be met.

While time constraints and other issues such as student and colleague expectations of literacy, influence exploration of social issues in any classroom, the most significant influence on critical literacy development in this class is the teacher's beliefs about literacy. The teacher in this study does not set out to use critical literacy as the foundation of her classroom practice. She is aware that some perspectives of literacy promote change. Her own perspective of literacy development is oriented towards personal change rather than explicit social change.

While she is believed to be a person of some experience in the literacy field, her limited staff development has not accommodated perspectives which make problematic the nature of 'active' literacy learning, and has not presented alternatives to functional and cultural/ 'active' understandings in such a way that she has time to reflect on them and explore with other teachers the ways in which they constrain actual classroom practices.

This study has outlined

1 questioning practices in an adult literacy classroom
2 teaching aims of one teacher
3 tensions the teacher confronts as she implements these aims and
4 the limited nature of staff development provision.

Analysis of the above four findings has proposed that alternative questions and questioning techniques might facilitate new ways of operating and knowing in adult literacy classrooms in order that students play a more active part in producing classroom knowledge and relating that knowledge to settings beyond their individual experience.

A number of educators (Allman:1990, Wallerstein:1983, Shor and Freire:1987) suggest dialogic encounters are fundamental in comprehensively addressing the complexity of issues shaping social interaction. But as mentioned previously dialogue is not a technique. It is underpinned by 'ways of knowing' which assume knowledge is mediated out of the social interaction between individuals and groups and that in addition the knowledge produced from such interaction is contestable.

The teacher's ability to move beyond 'what is' to 'what could be' is central to a dialogic process, however, regardless of her beliefs about the 'social' nature of literacy, the teacher in this study did not think she had developed the skills to 'prop people up' if she took on a more searching analysis of topics and encouraged further action. At one level she sees the classroom discussion as complex and the basis of literacy development in the class. At another level she believes time constraints are the key factor operating to limit classroom interaction.

I thought it was too difficult to (talk about the socialization of women) ... just so broad. If I really keep going back, it's time again isn't it. It's not just time it's the thought that that's not literacy ... it's important for them to understand but I think that I would need a lot of time, you know, we'd have to work on that for a long time. I could have made that (Women and rape) the topic we were going to discuss over a couple of weeks.

7.4 Conclusions for staff development

My preceding analysis of a teacher's questions and the opportunities they mask or create for dialogue only make sense when traditional perspectives of literacy and learning (what I have called functional and cultural approaches), are posited within a framework of critical literacy development which: challenges traditional power relations and the ways teachers and students operate in classrooms; makes explicit the socially constructed and contestable nature of classroom knowledge; and examines the connections between that knowledge and the 'private lives' (Mills:1959) of individuals.

The data in this study show that few opportunities for developing dialogic encounters are taken up by the teacher. This study has identified three areas of teacher questioning, each of which has the potential to create opportunities for dialogue: questions about classroom procedures, questions about knowledge, and questions about how that knowledge is related to students' experience. In addition further aspects of timing and patterning of questions contribute to the asymmetric pattern of classroom interaction in this study.

Contextual data indicate the teacher in this study has limited opportunities for staff development to examine classroom practice, and that when opportunities do arise they often focus on how things will be done at the expense of exploring reasons for action and the benefits to various parties from such action.

In terms of this study any policy or decision that proposes to consolidate and improve adult literacy must take factors such as questioning strategies, teaching aims and tensions and staff development infrastructure, past and present, into account if it is to adequately address the needs of the field.

Any move by teachers, teacher educators or policy makers to promote critical literacy in its political form (rather than a 'laundered' form which promotes cognitive 'cleverness') faces further constraints because such a move challenges two of the current bases on which literacy provision is currently being expanded and promoted: first that literacy is central to improved national productivity and second that through improved literacy provision issues of social justice can be redressed.

Adult literacy provision in Australia is currently undergoing major change at a number of levels: awareness of the nature of literacy, and increased funding for provision, policy development, staff development, resourcing and research. These

changes will consolidate policy directions which actively support literacy as the 'nuts and bolts of micro-economic reform' (Matheson:1990) and as a central factor in ensuring social justice for Australians. As stated previously, however, these policy directions are not necessarily consistent with a critical perspective of literacy provision.

This study has outlined the questioning practices of one teacher and the context in which she teaches. Such a context places limits on her ability to meet aims which are often antagonistic. Given the broader climate of policy decisions in Australia which reflect 'active', but not necessarily critical literacy perspectives, literacy teachers and teacher educators are likely to find they work in a context which does not support critical literacy. Moreover, as Harris (1989) has noted, a critical approach challenges the very basis of educational institutions. Any change in approach will require consideration of adequate staff development, and appropriate resources to support that change. In addition research models which reveal the complexities of literacy teaching and learning need to be ongoing, to monitor whether changes produce the outcomes intended.

However, central to a critical educational practice is the belief that teachers are able to initiate change through the work they do in classrooms. While this change may not address macro issues of social transformation, micro issues of personal change are one place for teachers to begin to contest patterns of 'disempowerment' as well as those of 'empowerment'. In one discussion in this study (Self Image) the teacher asked 13 questions which challenged knowledge presented in the written passage but was unaware of the ways in which her questioning practices restricted student exploration of those challenges.

For teachers who want to adopt a critical approach in their teaching, some staff development is necessary. At one level teachers need to change the asymmetric nature of classroom interaction and Dillon (1983) and Perrott (1988) offer alternatives to questioning practices which assist teachers in this. However the literature I have reviewed suggests that literacy teachers who seek to establish a 'relearning' climate in their classrooms must also have some understanding of the notion of dialogue. A dialogic practice intentionally challenges what is familiar, comfortable and natural. As Brookfield (1987) notes teachers who want to take up this practice within the context of a critical pedagogy must be competent, courageous, risk takers, with 'humility' and 'political clarity'.

Dialogue in the classroom implies responsibility on the part of both teacher and learner to be reflexive in their thinking, to challenge commonsense assumptions of classroom talk, to allow space to ask questions, to be courageous enough to actually ask questions and to ask questions for which there may be no answer or no single answer. As a form of interaction it is labyrinthine and time consuming with no predetermined outcomes. Because of its complex and at times uncomfortable nature, presentation of the theory will not guarantee that teachers take up consistent dialogic practice in the classroom.

Staff development opportunities will be needed on an ongoing basis to further teachers' understandings of the fluid process and to allow them to reflect on and challenge their beliefs and practices.

A contention of this thesis, supported by the literature reviewed in Chapter two, is that if alternative perspectives of knowledge and teacher-student relations of power are not articulated in adult literacy classrooms and staff development programs, then traditionally institutionalized practices of teaching and learning will continue to pervade adult literacy programs. The consequences of this are that one of the promises of literacy referred to earlier in this study, the promise of a 'new' educational life, will not be fulfilled. Opportunities will not be presented in classroom interaction or staff development programs for learners, as teacher educators, teachers, and literacy learners, to contribute to the ways in which they learn, what they learn, how relevant that learning is to them and how accurately it portrays the conditions of their lives.

Literacy programs and staff development programs which encourage learners to 'participate effectively' in educational settings and wider society, do little to enable them to challenge the hidden practices of social interaction which reproduce forms of knowledge and meanings which perpetuate systematic patterns of domination and subordination. In programs underpinned by a critical practice of education teachers and teacher educators join with literacy students as learners who might begin to ask questions for which they may have no answers.

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Appendix A:
Descriptive report of the study

Description of the study

Introduction

This appendix describes the institution and participants involved in this study. It provides the contextual detail necessary to an understanding of my analysis of the study. Its purpose is to provide the reader with corroborating details and a more complete picture of the site and its complexities. The description includes:

1 the researcher
2 selection of the teacher and the site
3 the institution: the adult literacy program, future plans for literacy and external constraints on teaching
4 the teacher
5 the students
6 other teaching staff
7 the classroom
8 teaching aims and tensions
9 teaching session organization: the three phases of the lesson
    phase one: individual folder work the break
    phase two: the discussion period
    phase three: revisiting folders
10 summary

To provide more of the texture of this study teacher and student quotes have been lifted from the transcripts to illustrate particular points

1 The researcher

Some years ago I was involved in a colleague's research as a 'peer debriefer', although I don't think either of us called it that at the time. A continuing theme in our conversations was the kinds of questions practitioners did not ask about the work of teaching. I have been interested in questions and the **absence** of certain types of questions ever since.

My work experience has given me a strong interest in sociological perspectives. As I began the thesis year of a higher degree award I was interested in research which had a direct bearing on adult literacy classrooms. I wanted to undertake classroom research informed by understandings of critical sociology.

I began the study working from a sociological perspective and in this study I found that issues of gender were added to understandings of race relations I had been exploring in previous employment. In the months before the study I had been involved in a number of DETAFE adult literacy workshops and was an active member of the South Australian Council for Adult Literacy. This gave me the opportunity to meet with literacy practitioners and in the months before the project began I had given a number of talks to DETAFE educators on various subjects, including negotiating with adult learners, and questioning in classrooms. These sessions helped me to clarify the direction the research
might take.

I began the research having close professional ties with some workers in the field. These included a number of close personal relationships - a factor which helped enormously in sounding out ideas.

2 Selection of the teacher and thus the site

I had certain site and teacher requirements which had to be met and others which would I believed enhance completion of the project. Necessary requirements:

- A teacher who was interested in exploring his or her classroom practice
- The teacher would accept me in the classroom as a participant-observer.
- The students would give approval for me to conduct the research and use some form of observation and recording of discussion.
- The organization supporting the class would approve the project.
- The program within which the class operated had to be stable with a history of provision spanning a period of at least 1.5-2 years.

Preferences:

- The site would be in the metropolitan area. I had a full time job, a young daughter, a 9 point course work unit to undertake and a 10 week observation period to juggle. I needed as few complications as possible.

Stability of the site meant I excluded community literacy programs almost immediately from the study. In South Australia adult and community programs have a reasonably long history (Commonwealth Government funding since 1977) but specific literacy provision has been relatively ad hoc (Branson:1988, Tillett:1989) and generally limited to 10 week funding grants until 1989, when more significant allocations of one year were granted as a result of 25% of OTE funding being allocated specifically to community adult literacy programs. At the beginning of 1990 all community programs were warned that their funding would cease in June 1990, and that any Federal funding for the initial January-June period would specifically support vocational initiatives (OTE:1989).

I did not want to take the risk of beginning the study and then having to negotiate another site because of cuts to funding, so I isolated my selection of a teacher to one who was working within a 'stable' site and restricted my selection to DETAFE colleges. This decision turned out to be less of a predictor of stability than I had initially thought and I discuss it further in section 3.

I undertook discussions with a number of colleagues in the area sounding out possible teachers with whom I could work - always maintaining a sense of confidentiality about my final choice. Most of these conversations took place by phone and I began by asking key people in the area to offer names of teachers whom they believed would be interested in the project. Two DETAFE literacy coordinators both offered very similar lists and I chose to follow up three of these teachers.

I did know of other very experienced teachers who would have been suitable for the project, however they had all been either seconded to complete curriculum work or were undertaking coordination duties at the time and had no direct teaching responsibilities. These people were included in my initial list of contacts but could not be included as possible teachers to be involved in the study.

Finally I narrowed the field to two teachers, teaching in two different colleges.

SITE A:
A night class comprising mainly male students working in an access studies setting which consisted predominantly of individual study with group work at some stage throughout the evening.

SITE B:
A day class comprising nine women and one young male working in what I believed to be a group setting.

I approached the teachers to discuss the project and get their reactions. As adult literacy coordinators, both teachers were experienced adult literacy practitioners, both coordinators of programs, and both were considered by their peers to be examples of "good" practitioners. Both were also responsible for staff development for adult literacy teachers within their respective colleges.

I chose the day class, working in the group setting, rather than an access group which operated mainly on individual folder programs because I believed this setting would be conducive to the nature of the project focusing as it did on classroom interaction. At that stage I thought the class I finally selected worked wholly in a group setting , however I found out later that they also included a certain amount of individual folder work in their programing.

I was interested in working with a class which was not focusing solely on literacy for employment and early conversations with the teacher at Site A led me to believe

employment was the main focus of that group's purpose for literacy development. In addition my reading in emancipatory research was fuelling an even deeper interest in education and issues of gender. I believed these areas had not been adequately addressed in the adult literacy field, and I was keen to work with a class comprising mostly women.

After discussion with the teacher at site B to gauge her interest, I negotiated, initially with DETAFE Central Office, and then through the local principal, to begin the research. Throughout the project and still today I am intrigued by what I perceived as a lack of interest shown by the principal in research taking place in the College. I put this down to any number of things: the particularly marginal nature of adult literacy at the college; the general range of problems facing all DETAFE principals during the period of the study, given the demands of a department undergoing award restructuring and facing the problematic task of reskilling its staff; even the inherent, but potentially mistaken trust placed in academic researchers. Never the less I notified the Principal of my research within the college and was told in a phone conversation:

If you're working with (the teacher) that's OK.

3 The institution: the adult literacy program, future plans for literacy and external constraints on teaching

The institution was automatically selected on selection of the teacher for the study. Each teacher who was approached taught at only one college during the period of observation. This is not always the case as some DETAFE colleges in SA have a number of campuses. Additionally some adult literacy teachers are employed part time by more than one college, or in more than one field of literacy provision. For example, some teachers work in Skillshare programs, Community and Neighbourhood Houses or DETAFE Colleges, however because of the nature of contract and hourly paid work in the adult literacy field, some people may even work across all three sectors.

The automatic selection of institution presented some problems, which only became apparent as the study progressed. The College was set in an Adelaide suburb in an area of relatively high unemployment and heavy industrial activity. As a result of the national climate of Award Restructuring and changing educational provision, the College in this study was coming under increasing pressure to apply its courses specifically to the vocational and further study needs of students.

On the first day of the research I arrived half an hour before the class was due to start only to be told that funding for the class was to be cut. At this time the teacher involved in the study and other tutors within the program discussed forms of protest over the funding cuts and the role the teachers could or should play in this. They believed that funding agencies and to a certain extent DETAFE administrators perceived that protests from tutors only sought to consolidate their own employment interests rather than those of the students. The tutors were in favour of action in which they played a background role if they were to protest the proposed funding cuts.

The initial cuts reduced funding for adult literacy from $16,000 in Semester 1 to $4,000 in Semester 2. Only one class would be offered in future, in contrast to the 9 on offer during the research period. The local paper ran a story on the cuts. Over the next week the position was reviewed by the college administration, the budget reconsidered, and subsequently 7 classes were offered in Semester 2, with funding stabilizing at $12,000.

Adult literacy provision in the College had stabilized, however, staffing, class numbers and type of class offered would all be different in Semester 2. From the beginning of Semester 2, July 1990, all literacy classes would offer structured courses called English A and B, and were 'available only to students seeking further study within TAFE'. The English A and B courses were subjects within the Introduction to Vocational Education (IVE) Course, a course which had recently been developed by the DETAFE Curriculum Services Branch. Adult literacy classes would offer selective parts of the IVE Course appropriate to literacy development, that is, English A and B and in this way they might serve as a spring board for further study into the IVE Course.

The funding changes, and class and curriculum changes described above are all issues which the teacher had to juggle in her daily practice as an adult literacy teacher. Interview data shows these issues affect her coordination in terms of courses offered, students taken into programs, and staff support/development she can reasonably provide given the constraints of her position.

> *Tr: (The principal) clearly wants me to only take in people ... who see (adult literacy) as a pathway into TAFE. So when I do the initial interviews now I'm to ask them are they seeking employment. And that would indicate that they need to do a TAFE course. If they're not, say middle aged women like J, who are quite clearly not going further into the workforce, well then I'm to ... send them to community literacy. ... in all these (funding) changes, that's the first very clear thing I've been told to do.*

The above guidance from the Principal clarified for the teacher the ways in which she might counsel students in the proposed new structure of literacy provision.

> *Tr: I know more where I stand now. ... I think that if I'm doing this job in a shorter time (because funding has decreased and she will have to increase her class contact time) that I need real guidelines on who I'm taking in, what they're doing. You know, (students) they come in, they're doing English A, (or) they're doing English B. I only take people who are going into TAFE. If that's the way it's to be well that's the way I'll do it. And that's easier to work in that framework than trying to help everybody.*

The teacher in this study made decisions about program planning which were intended to ease the strain of 'trying to help everybody' and accommodate the current

climate of educational provision which required increased accountability in the form of reporting literacy progress. The decisions the teacher made during the study included

1 offering the English A course as the focus of adult literacy classes.

> *Tr: I think politically - you can show outcomes much better from reading and writing than you can from speaking and listening. So I thought that would be easier to say they've done this part. There's another option and I'm not sure - maybe we could do it. Have a little workshop and do the speaking and listening over 8 hours like two mornings - maybe we could do it.*

But she was also influenced by the demands on her time. In Semester 2 1990, the teacher in this study would begin teaching within the new IVE Course to be offered as part of the general College program. She believed it was not possible to teach in a new course, and at the same time provide staff development to new staff within the program, to assist them in teaching the course.

> *Tr: I'm conscious of the fact that (in Semester 2 1990) I'll be teaching English A and B (within the new IVE Course) so I'll be looking at the (speaking and) listening and the English B (all sections not to be offered initially in adult literacy classes). So when I've taught the new course then I'll be able to teach the (part time instructors) how to do it. But how - right now it's just brand new stuff for everyone. And they really ought to do just a little bit well.*
>
> *I think that we can only handle a couple of things at once because we're trying to change*

2 adopting selective segments of the course, the reading and writing components

> *Tr: There's a speaking and listening component of English A. We're not going to get the (part time adult literacy) students through. ... it's 8 hours for speaking and 8 hours for listening (and) that's not going to fit into the (adult literacy) course. So I think in the two hours (available for each literacy class) ... we'll be able to do individual talking with them, you can't read and write without there being some discussion, but I can't see how we're going to tick off boxes (identifying the formal components) about speaking and listening.*

3 adopting specific progress reporting procedures which were to be included in the implementation of the IVE Course as it was offered in another part of the College program.

Adopting the English A course was a strategy undertaken by the teacher bearing in mind

> *Tr: What the teachers are able to manage, in such a short time - and what I'm able to manage. I've gotta be checking everything that they do. It's all based on ... the new directions that (adult literacy is taking).*

A staff meeting was held late in Term 2 of 1990 and the teacher introduced on of the main agenda items, managing the recording of student progress, as follows:

> *... the main thing for you now (is) to have a look at the terminal objectives (of the course) and work out how we 're going to do this with a student who 's coming here for two hours a week. And the other thing I wouldn 't mind talking about while we 're at it is how we 're going to program (plan activities for students). We 'll continue to do individual programing.*

Later in section 4 I describe how the above external constraints of funding, staffing and program changes influence preparation of class activities and teaching practice.

4 The teacher

The teacher in this study has been teaching in DETAFE for 13 years. Prior to being employed by TAFE she had been teaching in primary schools for 7 years, her entree to TAFE being an experimental adult literacy project involving two motor mechanic students. This project proved successful and she was offered employment with a DETAFE College. She described her entry to adult literacy as being 'in the right place at the right time'.

Her extensive literacy teaching experience was a good reason to include her in the project, because I wanted to explore questioning practices. I believed an experienced teacher would have come to terms with a range of other issues confronting adult literacy teachers, for example, diagnosing students' needs, availability of resources, strategies for specific needs, and juggling the diversity of needs commonly found in adult literacy programs.

4.1 Staff development experiences and reflections

During the research period the teacher coordinated the adult literacy program within the College. In the past she has shared this load with other part time workers. She was responsible for teaching two classes, coordinating the program and arranging volunteer tutor training and inservice staff development of teachers working in the program. As a measure of her considerable experience she is regularly asked to address preservice tertiary students on 'causes' of adult literacy difficulties and possible teaching approaches. She sees this as a challenge to her ideas about literacy development.

She has always been a paid tutor. Her perceptions of her early days in the field are that

> *No-one ever taught me (to teach adult literacy)*

She undertakes her own staff development by being involved as a speaker in the courses described above and speaking to community groups. She reads published

literature on adult literacy theory and practice. Examples of recent reading include Grant (1987), Hartley (1989), Wickert (1989), and the *Good Practice in Australian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Leaflets*.

Significantly her reading did not include familiarity with the ACAL policy statement released in 1989:

> *I haven't seen this list (of principles for adult literacy practice), I haven't even seen this piece of paper. ... I can honestly say it hasn't come. I mean some stuff comes and I haven't read it but this has never come. ... That's (the ACAL definition) an excellent definition.*

Staff development for the part time instructors within the program was also her responsibility and she believes this has always been constrained by the insecure nature of literacy funding which first, doesn't allow mutually agreeable times for people to meet within allocated work hours, and second is not long enough to address important program management issues and development of classroom 'good practice'.

Her belief is that little time is available for classroom teaching and classroom management as opposed to program management

> *I would really like to look at what other people are doing ... in their classrooms. I'd particularly like to look at how they do their assessment, particularly ongoing assessment. ... how they manage their time, how they manage two to three hour classes. I wouldn't mind looking at resources.*

In response to a request from the Principal for staff development ideas she said

> *I would like to have more time to be able to go and talk with other teachers. I really long to have a professional discussion with other people ... about what actually happens in the classroom. It seems that if I'm not teaching or preparing a lesson I'm fighting for funds. So there's no time for me to go and look at other resources*

As a coordinator she does go to coordinators' meetings however she says of these

> *(t)he truth of the matter is with adult literacy when you go off to meet other adult literacy people, you don't talk about what happens in the classroom, you talk about what you can do to save funds, or get more pti hours or how to cope really. ... Other people in (coordinator) jobs have said that there's never any time to talk about what we want to teach.*

The teacher in this study attempts to overcome these difficulties by arranging and attending staff development meetings focusing on methods and strategies which improve classroom practice. She talked of a 'grand plan' for

> *an inservice day for PTIs (part time instructors) ... a real workshop ... I would like people to come along and actually say what they are doing in their classes and how they do their assessments.*

But again this was not implemented because of the shortage of funds available to PTI people to come. She says

> *You can't expect them to come in their own time when they don't get paid much anyway.*

In reflecting on her own staff development and the focus of the research the teacher said

> *I've never had any staff development on how to run a discussion. I mean I've worked out along the way... we should have some 'rules'. (See section 9 for further detail.)*

The teacher defined her strengths as '... a people person ... good listener ... a searcher', who 'wants to be (more) analytic about (her) teaching'. She feels she responds well to student needs. As far as weaknesses go she thinks her preparation might be a bit 'slap dash' and doesn't see herself as an efficient keeper of classroom records.

She mentioned this in the second week of the research and related it to the pressure of funding cuts and resultant calls from irate students and community workers. These things demanded more of her time as a coordinator and reduced the amount of time available for classroom preparation. She explained

> *Tr: ... Just lately we have been having terrible funding problems, the worst funding problems I've ever had and the most arguments ... at our college. So you've seen me, I was really upset that first lesson (of the field observations) I had to do, I really couldn't concentrate on what was happening with the lesson. I was so upset because we were told our funding was going to be halved for the year. That funding issue goes on all the time. We have had to talk to students about it, you know, they might be going to lose classes and you have to make them aware of it.*
>
> *Su: How does that affect what you do in the class?*
>
> *Tr: Oh well, I'm a much calmer, happier teacher if things were - if I didn't have to worry about that funding issue, I'd put more time into preparing for the class.*
>
> *Su: Do you think it affects the quality (of your teaching)?*
>
> *Tr: Yes, of course it does because when I've got time - this is the worst it's ever been -it hasn't always been like that, I've had time to read articles and prepare better lessons and think about what the students need. Half the time I'm running in on a Tuesday spending the time talking to the principal about funding and then quickly rushing through my lesson prep. And then I've been into that classroom a couple of times and I'm quite shaky. ... So if I wasn't having those political battles I would be a much more effective teacher. I would be listening more to the students too and choosing better articles for them to discuss, more interesting things for them to read and I just feel like I'm, you know, that class is going quite well because they are all going quite well, but I don't feel like I'm giving them as interesting stuff as they could have.*

...

Tr: In actual fact I used to have, I really did used to have a lot more time. Often what I really used to do before you came along was I often didn't work on a Monday, I wasn't working on a Monday and I used to spend Monday afternoon, ... reading the paper myself and I sometimes cut out articles and write questions and block out words and all things like that. Just right now because I'm working at (another college) on Mondays, I haven't got as much time to do perhaps more interesting preparation.

Early in the study the teacher expressed a certain boredom or lack of challenge with the adult literacy area and stated she didn't go to as many extra curricular activities as she used to. When asked whether she felt it was time for a change she replied 'absolutely', qualifying her statement by adding

But maybe in a new adult literacy environment where it's valued it would be different.

The teacher's experience and knowledge of the adult literacy field made her a valuable informant however my final choice was influenced by her interest in the project and her expressed wish to ''think more about her practice.''

5 The students

There were 10 students enrolled in the class throughout the research period. The age of the group varied ranging from 16 to the late 60s. Cultural backgrounds were diverse, however all were either of European descent or white Australians. All but 2 students in the initial interview had identified a reason for attending class. Most reasons were related to employment: seeking promotion, gaining access to employment or improving opportunities for further study via employment.

Figure 11. summarizes student data according to age, attendance, initial reason for attending classes and intentions for semester 2, 1990. Students were aware of the changes to classes in the Semester 2 program and in indicated they would 'continue classes' they knew that the classes on offer would not be the same as in previous terms.

	Age	Attendance over 10 weeks	Initial purpose	Semester 2 intentions
J	67	8	personal interest	continue classes
S	69	8	personal interest	"
A	50	8	?	"
P	early 40s	6/6	?	"
R	47	7	gain promotion	?
G	21	10	prepare for study	?
L	28(?)	8	further study	into IVEC
Rc	19	2/2	change jobs	left in week 4
O	16	4	job preparation	re-entry school
M	39	8	to get a job	going to another college

Figure 11 Student profile data.

S, L and A had been attending classes for over a year. Both L and A had come from other programs; A from the Adult Migrant Education program, L from an adult literacy program in another metropolitan college. R had been attending classes for about 6 months. The rest of the women, except for P, had been interviewed between February and March in the year of the study (1990) and had been attending classes for a few months. P began classes in the fifth week of the study. O, the 16 year old male, had been interviewed in January 1990 by the teacher, and had been attending intermittently for the whole of the first term.

Only S and J had had any social contact prior to attending class and I gained the impression that most of the other women made no attempts to either contact each other socially or for class purposes during the time away from class. Four of the women were from non-English speaking backgrounds. This influenced their understanding of the class discussion at times. When the teacher worked with them on a 1:1 basis there were less communication difficulties.

Throughout the research and in the writing up of the report I often refer to the class as "the women". The teacher regularly refers to O, the only male in the group, as "not quite fitting in this class". She believed he belonged in school or more appropriately a re-entry school. On the final day of term O attended and took up the teacher's suggestion to go to a re-entry school the next semester.

6 Other teaching staff in the class

In this class a volunteer tutor assisted the teacher. D had been with the College for 10 years. Her role in the class consisted largely of helping students to read newspaper articles and written passage set for discussion during the second half of the class. She usually worked in the computer room adjacent to the classroom and students would go in to read to her throughout the first session of the class. This tended to happen automatically; as one student returned another would go in to read. After the break D would join the group for the discussion period.

7 The classroom

The adult literacy rooms in this study were part of a College of DETAFE and consisted of a shared office for staff, a central room which housed computers, filing cabinets, some tables and shelved resources, and a separate literacy classroom.

The classroom consists of a number of moveable single desks and chairs, a portable blackboard, shelving around the perimeter of the room and a variety of texts for use by students. A pinboard was on one of the walls. In the first week I noted the following contents:

ideas for essays
map of the building
two International Literacy Year posters
a note telling students their autobiographies were available
poster about a dance workshop
a calendar
Greenpeace poster
handout on food additives
poster about dolphins and the Rainbow Warrior

Its contents rarely changed throughout the research period. I never observed students reading notices or information on the board, taking notes from it or adding information to it.

There were often two staff present in the adult literacy area but rarely for prolonged periods of time. The contract nature of staffing meant that staff rarely taught at the same times to ensure that adult literacy classes could be offered over a range of times. This also meant staff had little contact with each other. Phone calls for the literacy program would be diverted by the College's central switchboard and the teacher made a point of answering only urgent calls during class times. During the research period these calls seemed to coincide with information about the funding crisis, although some were from other colleges to confirm Semester 2 program details, and inter-college meetings.

In keeping with the confidentiality of the project DETAFE staff were told I was "working" with the teacher, and at times I answered the phone, took messages and discussed general adult literacy business with hourly paid staff in the program.

8 Teaching aims and tensions

During interviews with the teacher she frequently referred to what she believed was the purpose of the class and her expectations of students in the class. The following quotes from interviews highlight her teaching aims and support her view of literacy as an 'active' process.

> *Su: What do you think is the purpose of these classes? What are you trying to achieve?*
>
> *Tr: So that they (the students) can reach the goals (stated in initial interviews) But at the same time I'm sort of, I'm pushing them into other TAFE courses. I suggest to them. I say ... 'Where are you going, what are we doing this for?'*
>
> *... That's part of it, isn't it to see where they're going next. ... I think I have to be seeing where they are going.*
>
> *When I know some of them are wanting to go somewhere ... I just follow up with those I think can be helped.*

Su: Could you define your charter for adult literacy?

Tr: I think it's about teaching them reading and writing. No one ever told me what I should be doing in literacy, but that's what I picked up

...

(Some adult literacy teachers believe) everyone should do individual work sitting in their seats at desks. I'm never like that, I thought there should be a combination of both. ...

There should be some time for talking. If you can't logically talk through things then how can you logically write things. I used to always think that. But not everyone in adult literacy believes that at all.

I (also) think the class should function as a class, and I feel quite secure in that idea. And I think it's fine for them to read and discuss something. ...

... because (the students) are at such individual levels I think they do need individual programs ... the reading and writing that they do themselves from their own words does improve their written work. But I feel really conscious that that is not everything that needs to be improved in the class. What has been coming out since you have been here is a lot of stuff about how inadequate they feel about themselves, lack of self image, lack of support from their family, and you're right maybe that's just as important as the reading and writing. I don't know, I don't know the answer (to that balance).

I expect them to have done some sort of writing every lesson, they are here for three hours, they should have done a fair bit of writing.

I would like to make (the class) happy for them. I'd like to make it a bit cohesive so that they will all come back next week.

I've got that strong feeling that if they don't do something in the 3 hours, well they are really wasting their time and my time and they might not come back.

If they go home and they have done nothing they might say 'Oh what a waste of time, I'm not doing anything I won't come back. I never know, I'm not an expert on it ... (but) I get the feeling they would not value a whole hour of discussion and chat.

What I have been trying to do in there, I've been trying to do confidence building in that class too, but that comes along with this stuff (the ACAL definition) about "enhancing people's capacity to think, create and question." I think I do this.

I proposed a set of teaching tensions emerging from these aims and my observations of her teaching. They related to the learning environment and the degree of challenge or ease with which literacy activities were undertaken, he extent to which individual and group needs could be accommodated simultaneously, the balance between tangible literacy development in the form of written outcomes and less tangible development related to oral communication and interpersonal skills, and the extent

and depth to which issues were explored. During 'member checks of the contextual summaries developed throughout the study (See Chapter 3) the teacher agreed with the above summation saying

> *Yes I'm agreeing with you that these are all my dilemmas but not everyone thinks that.*

She reminds me of an earlier comment that

(Some adult literacy teachers believe) everyone should do individual work sitting in their seats at desks. I'm never like that, I thought there should be a combination of both. ...

9 Teaching session organization

A fairly standard description of classroom life, corroborated by the teacher, follows.

The teacher prepares notes and worksheets for students' folders, generally the morning before the lesson. This is usually the culmination of thinking over student needs and discussions with individuals from the previous week and is quite a labor intensive exercise. She is required to complete individual folder planning sheets for the 10 students in the class in this study, in addition to planning sheets for classes later in the week. The preparation period is often interrupted by inquiry phone calls, interviews with prospective students and administrative demands from the College.

During the period of the study the teacher thought the administrative demands were particularly heavy and this affected her discussion and other class preparation. (See section 4 in this appendix.)

Student folders are stored in the central room and students retrieve their own folder as they move into the classroom to begin the lesson. Folders contain worksheets, examples of student work and previous planning sheets - often pink for easy identification when students are looking for work set for the current week. Some students carry on a 'conversation' with the teacher through the planning sheets, letting her know when they complete work and whether it was appropriate. The teacher has set up guidelines for the completion of work in previous sessions.

Sections of planning sheets are included in Figure 12. on the next page.

Figure 12.

(L) ACCESS ENGLISH RECORD SHEETS DATE: 29.5. 30.5

READING

What did you read during the week? ..... L ↓ Are you reading anything at the moment?
..... Yes. Book called 'This girl' .....

What are you going to read today?

1. Reading aloud: ~~Read to D~~ ~~discuss the article~~ ~~ask for a~~
..short dictation ✓ and THURSDAY ✓
.....

2. Reading silently with questions: ~~Thursday~~ HOMEWORK ✓
1). Poison at home .....
.....2). Dinner found THURSDAY hanged ✓
.....

WRITING

What topic are you going to develop today? .....

Write a rough copy and show it to your teacher.

Write about a time in your life when you agreed to do something which you did not want to do ✓

Spelling and Clear Expression

1) P67 L.U.B.E. 4

2) Spelling Test. THURSDAY ✓

3) Computer Practice - THURSDAY

4) Discussion with me about I.V.E ✓

Comments

HAVE - CROSS WORDS

Random Breath Testing ✓
did Thursday ~~Read~~ found it slowley to do Because of having to use the diel

HOMEWORK - cross words
- Finish Random Testing
- write about going out to tea with someone nice.
- GROUP HOMEWORK

Figure 12.

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Students generally arrived between 12:25pm and 12:35pm. An exception was L who was often there earlier during the research period and would work in the computer room. The first 5-10 minutes of the lesson is spent in settling down and sometimes rearranging the tables and chairs. Some discussion takes place between students but the teacher will often direct this towards literacy activity if the discussion is prolonged. This might include a direct question to a student about the contents of their folder and the work still to complete or an oblique reference to the purpose of the class:

Tr: Sounds like a riot going on in here

Phase one: individual folder work

The next 70-80 minutes is spent in relatively quiet individual work on activities prepared by the teacher in student folders. Students are able to choose the order and speed at which they work and at times the degree of accuracy or completion which they achieve. Topics and materials are generally chosen on the basis of previous discussions with students and the group discussion topic plays a significant part in the writing they develop at home or during this first period of the lesson.

The purpose of this first session of the day is checking and correcting previous work and negotiating on future activities with the teacher. During the same period students move in to the smaller adjoining room to read to the volunteer tutor who has been working with classes at the College for the past 10 years.

The volunteer tutor often works through the written passage which is the focus of the discussion period and this activity is intended to familiarize students with the content, structure, language and basic issues of the written passage which may be a section of a book, article from the newspaper or letters to the editor pages. Some students use the Library, some access computer terminals and all see the teacher at some stage during this period to discuss their program.

The break

After this session students take a break which requires a 5 minute walk to the other end of the College. Students and staff are not allowed to boil a jug within the rooms. Biscuits and coffee are stored in the filing cabinet and someone often brings cake or scones to share with others.

During the break students talk about their daily lives, interests and achievements. The teacher joins in this and often adds anecdotes from her own life. General topics of conversation included buying houses, losing weight, favourite recipes, movies on television or showing at the cinema and references to family relationships.

Phase two: the discussion period

The break usually lasts about 10 minutes, including the walk and then the small group discussion of 40-50 minutes begins. The teacher describes her expectations for the discussion sessions as follows:

to start with it was a break, it's a change where they do get tired of writing ... it's to hold the group together so the group has something to go on talking about each week and to get on better with each other. ... And I try to choose topics that will widen their horizons. Part of that is to increase their spelling vocabulary, their ability to read and part of it is to focus on some of the issues that they are bringing up. It is never quite long enough for this kind of topic. (ie Self Image)

I want everyone to join in ... some people join in and overdo it, so I have to say, thank you, that's enough from you really.

I say everything's valued (opinions) and we have to listen.

It (the discussion) usually follows up with a homework assignment. It is usually an introduction to the work they are going to do on their own ... I think they see it like that.

As a teacher I like the discussion part best ... but I think if we don't get back to the writing they might think that they're not improving.

I always think they should be enjoying themselves ... doing some reading and some talking and understanding including the vocab, but it is also to be having a good time so that the group works.

In regard to specific sessions her instructional aim varies according to the topic, however the purpose is to always complete the written extract which provides the focus for the lesson. For the Self Image discussion she said

I wanted to reach the people there that do feel pretty under confident ... I wanted them to start thinking about how they could praise themselves a bit more and to a certain extent it touched on that.

What I'd like them to think about at home is why they got the message. (negative messages about themselves) I'm busy knowing that, you know, there's a message ... but they're back a bit, they don't realize that.

Concerning the Assertiveness discussion she said:

I truly wanted them to understand what assertive behaviour was and I wanted them to feel that they have some rights in making decisions ... maybe I wanted to give them some skills that they could go (away) and use and then come back and talk about it.

The students also had opinions about the discussion period. R says during a class discussion

I didn't think we were ever going to do this. (have discussions) But I think its good - makes you stop and think about issues more and get more confident.

And later in an interview she says

We are all at different stages but everybody has the same problem. It's not only me

M believes the discussion:

> *Helps me a lot, because I was at a bad stage ... before I took this class ... and decided that I had to start overcoming some of my fears and one of my greatest fears was of school. So I came in here and I was shaking at the knees and I'm starting to feel a lot more relaxed now.*

J says about the MFP discussion:

> *Firstly I have to think about it (the MFP) What it was going to be. I could not say what it is because I did not know anything about it. ... I asked a friend about that ... And then I read more in the paper. ... Talk with other people. Listen to the wireless.*

Each topic provides the students with a means of discussing issues relevant to them. But the discussion was rarely seen to be explicitly related to their goals.
M says:

> *Spelling was something that I wanted to improve. ... I thought once I know how to spell I know how to do anything, which I mean, it didn't come that way. ... I find out more about what's going on around me. Up until now its mainly been just the children and housework ... and now these things that have been brought up, we've been talking about them and finding out more ... there's things now that I have become more aware of through these discussions.*

But S sees the problems in taking time to explore an issue fully.

> *The only thing is that by learning a lot about a lot of things, discussing and writing it would take much longer to be able to put in words ... you know it takes longer to learn.*

The students gain support from discussion periods, and are able to explore issues related to their own lives. As far as the teacher is concerned a successful discussion includes the following elements

> *... people have participated, seemingly enjoyed it and have gone away and done some writing.*

I summarized from our interviews the central elements of a discussion as follows and she agreed with these.

- all participants should have a turn to speak
- all speakers' opinions are valued
- when opinions become disparate the class "agrees to disagree" rather than tease out differences
- the discussion will be linked to an activity (usually written) to be taken up in phase three of the lesson or later at home
- the discussion period should be an enjoyable part of the lesson

A particular characteristic of the discussions in this study are the written passages accompanying each discussion. The length, readability and conceptual clarity all influence the questions asked by the teacher and the time taken to complete a reading of the passage.

Reading of the written passage within the discussion period takes up most of the time, and discussion sessions end with a clarification of the written task.
The effects of the written passage on discussion are as follows:

- it focuses the discussion
- it assists teacher control of the discussion to achieve a complete reading of the written passage and examination of the accompanying tasks.
- provides concrete reading tasks and writing tasks via the literacy activity set by the teacher to address the specific needs students have identified in attending classes
- supplies information which may not have been readily available in other arenas of their life. As J has said about the MFP discussion 'I could not say what (the MFP) is because I did not know anything about it.'
- enables the teacher to draw attention to aspects of the written passage or the topic which she believes are worthy of examination:

  And that's all the jargon that's in this, there are some new words for you to learn, but now it gets quite easy.

Completion of the discussion is signalled by the teacher as she redirects activities back to folder work or towards activities in the computer room.

> *I'll finish off now and perhaps you can go back to your own writing. Sue and I will come round and do spelling tests. No one seems to have used the computer, S you were going to update yours. ...*
>
> *Who has not read to Dot?*

Phase three: revisiting folders
The final period is usually short (about 1/2 an hour) and involves spelling tests given by the teacher and based on students' individual lists. The results are recorded on sheets kept in folders although record keeping appeared ad hoc during the research period.

10 Summary

During the first phase of the class the overall feeling is of focused individual development. The women work on individual projects, skills and goals and do not see other students as able to help them in this phase of the class. Students thought they could learn from each other but suggested this was most relevant to the discussion time.

There is very little movement during the first phase with the exception of students moving in to read to the volunteer tutor. Some students have quiet conversations others ask for clarification from students sitting near them. Apart from this the most common talk in the first and last phases of the session was between the teacher and the individual student with whom she worked.

During the discussion period, the second phase of the session the women come together as a group for 40-50 minutes to talk about a topic of shared interest. All women remain seated during the discussion and focus on the written passage. They rarely ask questions (See Chapter 4).

In the final phase of the class students return to unfinished older work, or begin work on the literacy activity which was set by the teacher to follow up the class discussion. In this class students have access to a computer and software to assist them with spelling and vocabulary development. Some do computer work in the third phase of the session while others were given spelling tests by the teacher or myself as we moved around between students to continue the checking and counselling of the first phase.

In a questionnaire to explore their understandings of the class and the teacher's way of teaching , students described the classroom as "friendly" a place where they are "with friends", "learn new things", and "put their thinking caps on". They believe the teacher is 'supportive' and 'encouraging', that she has tried to help them with 'lack of confidence' and she lets the students 'go at their own pace'. One noted the 'if (my) views are wrong (the teacher's) questioning would bring this out'.

Appendix B:
Examples of written passages guiding the discussion

SELF-IMAGE

Have you ever noticed that when you are feeling good about yourself, other people become very nice? Isn't it funny how they change!

The world is a reflection of ourselves. When we hate ourselves, we hate everybody else. When we love being who we are, the rest of the world is wonderful.

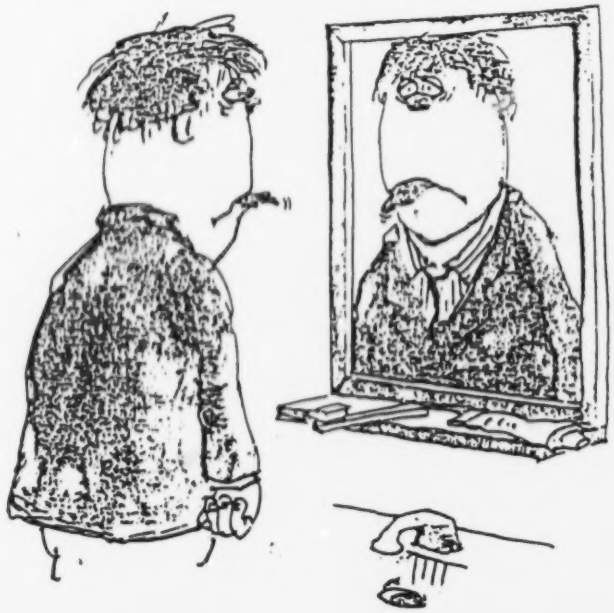
Our self-image is the blueprint which determines exactly how we will behave, who we will mix with, what we will try and what we will avoid, our every thought and every action stem from the way we see ourselves. The picture we have of ourselves is coloured by our experiences, our successes and failures, the thoughts we have had about ourselves and other people's reactions to us. Believing this image to be fact, we proceed to live absolutely within the bounds of this picture.

Therefore, our self-image determines –

- how much we like the world and how much we like living in it
- exactly how much we will accomplish in life

We are what we believe we are. Hence, Dr. Maxwell Maltz, author of the bestseller "Psycho-Cybernetics" wrote, "The goal of any psycho-therapy is to change an individual's image of himself."

If you see yourself as being hopeless at mathematics, you will always have difficulty with [illegible]. Perhaps sparked by some bad early experiences, you will have developed an attitude that says, "No matter what, I can't do [illegible]. Therefore, you don't try. Generally, you will fall further and further [illegible]. If ever you do succeed, you say "It's a fluke." When you don't succeed, you say, "There! That proves I am he[illegible]." Chances are that you would also tell others that you can't add up. The more you tell your brother and your husband and your neighbour and your bank manager that you are a hopeless c[illegible], the more you believe it, the more deeply embedded that self-image b[illegible].



The first step toward a vast improvement in our results is to chang the way we think and talk about ourselves. A slow learner can begin t become a fast learner as soon as he changes his ideas about his own capa bilities. If your self-image says that your co-ordination is excellent, you' pick up new sports easily. If your self-image says you are a klutz, then yo will spend so much time worrying about dropping the ball and succeedin in doing exactly that.

So long as you see yourself as someone who is always broke, you will remain broke. If you see yourself as a financial winner, you will be prosperous.

Our self-image is like a thermostat and we continue to perform within the prescribed range. It may be that Fred expects to be happy about fifty percent of the time. Therefore, whenever things are going extra well for Fred, he'll think, "Wait! Things aren't meant to be this good! Something is bound to go wrong any minute." When it does, Fred takes a deep breath and says, "I knew it couldn't last."

What Fred may not realise is that there are other people in the world who are unhappy all the time, and still others who are happy nearly all the time. We create our own quality of life, based on our own happiness self image.

What this means is that WE DECIDE on our own self-image. We decide on our own worth and decide how much happiness to expect.

Write one paragraph explaining your views on your own happiness?

COMPLIMENTS or, why not just say, Thank you . . .?

Our self-image determines our focus, or what we allow ourselves to think about. A good self-image allows us to concentrate on compliments paid to us and the successes we have achieved. This is not to be confused with having a big head. Someone once remarked, "Conceit is a weird disease. It makes everybody sick except the one that has got it!" *Being egotistical and having a healthy self-love are complete opposites.*

Being egotistical and having a healthy self-love are to be differentiated.

People with huge egos need to be the centre of attention, crave recognition and have little concern for those around them.

On the other hand, a healthy self-love enables us to respect our own wishes as well as the wishes of others. It means we can feel proud of our

achievements without needing to broadcast them, and it means we can accept our shortcomings while striving to improve o[illegible]. (12)

A healthy self-love means we have no compulsion to justify to ourselves or others why we take vacations, why we sleep late, why we buy new shoes, why we spoil ourselves from time to time. We feel comfortable doing things which add quality and beauty to life.

Do you?

Let's recognise that there is no such thing as a "superiority complex."

When we genuinely appreciate our own worth, there is no need to tell the world how good we are. It is only the person who hasn't convinced himself of his own worth, who proceeds to inform the rest of humanity of his value.

Let's acknowledge that it is OK to accept a compliment when it is paid to us. We don't have to be perfect to accept a compliment with a graceful thank you. Successful people always do say, "Thank you". They realise that it is healthy to acknowledge a job well done.

If you congratulate Greg Norman on his winning a golf tournament, he won't say, "It was an accident." He won't say, "Just lucky". He will say, "Thank-you". If you were to congratulate Paul McCartney on a new hit

* Describe someone you know who is like this. 19

record, he wouldn't say. "You're nuts! That record is junk." He would say "Thank you." These men, like all successful individuals, have come to appreciate their own worth; and they did that long before they became successful, in order to be successful. As with any one of us, they needed to recognise their own value first.

A compliment is a gift. It takes thought and effort to bestow a compliment on somebody. Like any gift, it is disappointing to have it thrown back in your face. This is another reason to accept a compliment gracefully. Assume a friend of yours remarks on your striking appearance: to which you reply, "But I have got fat lips and short legs!"

Now you feel bad because you haven't accepted the compliment in the spirit in which it was given. They feel bad for the same reason, and remember you as their short-legged, fat-lipped little friend. Why not just say thank you?

This is from a book called "Being Happy"

THE "I" OTHER PEOPLE SEE

We can assess our own self-image by looking at the people around us. We form relationships with people who treat us the way we believe we deserve to be treated. People with healthy self-images demand to be respected by those close to them. They treat themselves well, and so set an example to other people as to how they should be treated.

If Mary has a bad self-image, she will put up with all kinds of garbage and abuse from just about everybody. In the back of her mind will be thoughts like, "I don't matter that much", "It's only me", and "I have always been treated badly. Perhaps I deserve it!"

We may ask, "How long will Mary have to put up with mistreatment?"

The answer is, "As long as she has a low opinion of herself."

People treat us the way we treat ourselves. Those with whom we associate quickly assess whether we respect ourselves. If we treat ourselves with respect, they will follow suit!

I imagine that we all know of women, with poor self-images, who have stumbled from one disastrous relationship to the next. Each time their partner has been a drunk or a "no-hoper". In each case they have found themselves being abused, either physically or emotionally. Unfortunately, the pattern will continue to repeat itself so long as they persist in their

Why are we non-assertive?

Through not stating what you really want you are not giving the other person a chance to satisfy your need. Then why don't we just ask outright? What stops us?

(i) fear that our request will be turned down – and then what would we feel and do;

(ii) anxiety about embarrassing someone who does not wish to do what we would like them to do;

(iii) we have been brought up to be 'polite' – which often means trying to anticipate what someone else really wants by telepathy instead of by asking them. People cannot read your mind they can only observe your behaviour.

What are the consequences of not being assertive?

By not being assertive we often end up feeling mad with ourselves or mad with someone else who somehow should have divined what we want. A person can also only take so much. By bottling up feelings for too long you may suddenly find yourself blowing up and often at something which is out of all proportion to the incident itself.

He: 'I'm sorry, I forgot to post the letters. I was just too busy.'

She: What do you mean – too busy? You're always too busy. You never think of anyone but yourself. You expect me to run after you – everything revolves around you – you've never got time to pay any attention to me. It's always work, work, work!'

He: 'But I only forgot to post some letters!'

It is useful to note here that words like *always* and *never* are rarely true. When someone uses them against you you should be aware that it is almost certainly an exaggeration. Someone is trying to assert something about you which cannot be true. On the other hand, the very extremity of the words is communicating a message. Listen to the strength of the expression rather than take the words literally.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASSERTION, AGGRESSION AND NON-ASSERTION

ASSERTION	AGGRESSION	NON-ASSERTION
YOU DO: ● ask for what you want, ● directly and openly, ● appropriately, ● have rights, ● ask confidently and without undue anxiety.	YOU DO: ● try to get what you want, ● in any way that works, ● often give rise to bad feelings in others, ● threaten, cajole, manipulate, be sarcastic, fight.	YOU DO: ● hope that you will get what you want, ● sit on feelings, ● rely on others to intuit what you want.
YOU DON'T: ● violate other people's rights, ● expect other people to magically know what you want, ● freeze up with anxiety.	YOU DON'T: ● respect that other people have a right to get their needs met, ● look for situations in which you both might be able to get what you want ('win-win situations').	YOU DON'T: ● ask for what you want, ● express your feelings, ● usually get what you want, ● upset anyone, ● get noticed.

Home Work. Record three incidents when you were assertive this week.

What does assertive mean?

What does aggressive mean?

What is so good about being assertive?

The ability to express feelings constructively and to be open to others about what you want, maximizes the chances of your getting the kind of relationship you want, the job you want, the friends you want, the society you want, the life you want.

You will be more confident, less punishing of others, less frustrated, less anxious.

All of this is well documented in research findings. Being assertive is another facet of being PROACTIVE. Proactivity would appear to be the dimension which is most correlated with high self-esteem and consequently mental health. All these qualities reinforce each other.

THE RING OF SUCCESS

The more assertive we are the less likely we are to be aggressive, as aggression is usually fueled by frustration.

Why don't we always assert ourselves?

- As children we are sometimes punished for expressing our opinions. Consequently we may now feel uncomfortable in situations which call for us to express ourselves.
- By doing what others want us to do we often are praised. That feels good so we learn that people will like us if we do what they wish.
- Our schools often reward the obedient, quiet child. The inquisitive, opinion-giving child may be seen as disruptive and make life too uncomfortable.
- We sometimes do not realize that there is an alternative to pleasing others or being aggressive. We have not learned the behaviours which will help us to seek for what we want to do.
- Some cultures and belief systems strongly discourage assertiveness. Some traditional Christian teachings, eg 'turn the other cheek', 'always give to others with no thought of yourself', are very strong in western society and have been used by some people as arguments against being assertive. In many eastern countries one should never contradict an older person.
- We may not be sure about what rights we actually have.

What happens when one assertive person meets another assertive person?

The short answer is that they both stand a better chance of getting their needs met as each person will have stated their preferences. In addition, they are both on equal ground; no-one is at a disadvantage. This will make negotiation more open and direct.

He: 'I would rather not direct the school play this year.'

She: 'I really want you to do it because I think you're the best person for the job.'

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for Human Development
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ISBN 0-86803-071-6